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**DEFINING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH FOODWAYS:
THE CORBIT HOUSEHOLD
OF CANTWELL'S BRIDGE, DELAWARE, 1802-1810**

by

Amy Elizabeth Marks

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
with a major in Early American Culture**

Spring 2000

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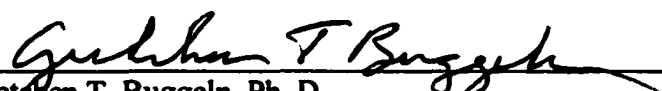
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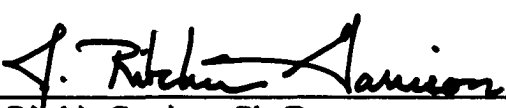
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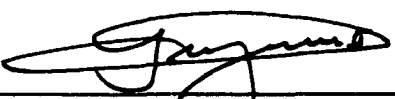
**DEFINING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH FOODWAYS:
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by

Amy Elizabeth Marks

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ABSTRACT

Early American material culture studies have tended to focus on objects related to food production and consumption, rather than on food itself. But unlike objects that were owned or used by some people and not others, food was and is part of everyone's daily lives. As such, it is a key to the intricate daily operations and relationships that were necessary to keep early American households running. The primary goal of this thesis is to demonstrate how the unique properties of food enable it to provide a broader window into early American culture than other, less ubiquitous objects. More specifically, this project illustrates food's powerful access to daily life by examining how the Corbit household of Cantwell's Bridge, Delaware, used their food to communicate and reaffirm household roles and relationships between 1802 and 1810.

During this time their household, as defined here, included members of the Corbit family, both parents and children, as well as their many servants. Section two, after the introduction, identifies the identity of each household member and the most significant aspects of his or her role in the household's foodways. Sections three and four trace how Corbit household members manipulated the ingredients of a mincemeat pie through their social and spatial systems from the moment they entered Corbit hands to the moment they appeared on the table as a single prepared dish. By documenting who obtained and processed these ingredients, where he or she went, and who he or she contacted in doing

so, it is possible to document specific patterns in the Corbits' food-related behavior. As the product of this meaningful process, the mincemeat pie becomes a symbolic object: each Corbit embedded the meaning behind his or her food-related actions into the pie itself, and as the embodiment of this meaning, the pie communicated it back to other household members.

This thesis finds that the mincemeat pie symbolically embodies and communicates information about four main aspects of the Corbit household: division of labor, use of space, relationships with other households, and members' differing social and spatial spheres based on gender and position in the household's hierarchy.

INTRODUCTION

On June 28, 1827, thirteen-year-old James Corbit, newly arrived at a Methodist boarding school in Massachusetts, penned a letter to his “Dear Uncle, Grandmother, [and] Aunt” in Cantwell’s Bridge, Delaware. The unhappy scholar made no attempt to hide his homesickness or contempt for the strict non-Quaker school, declaring that “the Friends is the best society there is” and “at home I might learn twice as much in day school.” Sent to the faraway institution by his maternal grandfather, orphaned James appeals to his deceased father’s Quaker family for understanding and reassurance. After begging them not to “shew this letter to Grandpapa [Davis],” he closes the increasingly morose composition by grasping at a tangible reminder of his happy experiences with the Corbits:

It sometimes seems like as if I was at home setting around your little table with papa and Aunt Molly, uncle tom, unc penal, Grandpappy and you, joking about me, Indeed if I was home I should think it a paradise eating Grandmother’s bread & butter. O Dear me, if I only had the least piece of her nice bread & butter I would eat it as greedy as a hog. . . .¹

For James the mere thought of his grandmother’s bread and butter evoked not only a greedy appetite, but a detailed picture of home, and of his family gathered to consume a favorite food.

To students of early American foodways, however, James’s musings over his grandmother’s bread and butter also evoke curiosity about the meaning he seems to

associate with the food. His recollection is vivid: the bread and butter he longs to consume greedily are accompanied by a specific place and particular people. He imagines layers of space peeling away like an onion; in his mind he has left Massachusetts and is at home in Delaware, in Cantwell's Bridge, in his grandmother's house, at a small table. Around that table he has placed a network of people who are connected by the experience of sharing their matriarch's bread and butter. By the time James pens this letter, several of those people have passed away, and he has journeyed a great distance from the place he remembers. But in mentioning the bread and butter to the remaining family members who shared it, he reminds them of a comfortable, happy time.

Early American material culture studies of foodways have tended to focus on objects related to food production and consumption, rather than on the food itself. But evidence such as this Corbit letter suggests it is possible to understand food as a meaningful object in early America. The primary goal of this thesis is to demonstrate how the unique properties of food enable it to provide a broader window into early American culture than other, less ubiquitous objects. Unlike objects that were owned or used by some people and not others, food was and is part of everyone's daily life. As such, it is a key to the intricate daily operations and relationships that were necessary to keep early American households running. More specifically, this project will illustrate food's powerful access to daily life by examining how one early nineteenth-century family used their food to communicate and reaffirm household roles and relationships.

To conduct such a study one must select a group of people who share the same food, and who thus create and communicate that food's meaning together. This project

will focus on the Corbit household of Cantwell's Bridge (now Odessa), Delaware, between 1802 and 1810. During that time their household, as defined here, included members of the Corbit family proper, both parents and children, as well as their many servants. Chapter two will identify, as closely as available evidence allows, the identity of each household member and the most significant aspects of his or her role in the household's foodways. Like characters in a stage set, each Corbit household member had a role to play, and a unique way of moving about his or her physical environment depending on that role. The identity, household position, and personal characteristics of each member determined, to some degree, where in the physical environment he or she went, what he or she did there, and with whom he or she interacted. This interactive social and spatial system is directly linked to how food is used to communicate meaning within the household.

To document the specifics of these social and spatial systems and to determine how they imposed symbolic meaning onto the food itself, chapters three and four will trace how Corbit household members manipulated the ingredients of a mincemeat pie through their social and spatial systems from the moment they entered Corbit hands to the moment they appeared on the table as a single prepared dish.² Although it is only one dish, the mincemeat pie is ideal for tracing the networks by which the Corbit household obtained and processed its food. Since the pie's ingredients are as various as beef, lemon, and butter, the Corbits had to contact several sources and process many ingredients individually before assembling the final pie. By documenting who obtained and processed these ingredients, where he or she went, and who he or she contacted in

doing so, one can trace specific patterns in the Corbits' foodways behavior. Through his or her food-related activities, each household member gained access to different social and spatial spheres. During the creation of a dish like the mincemeat pie, each household member exercised his or her unique kind of access to obtain and process the ingredients. As the product of this meaningful process, the mincemeat pie becomes a symbolic object: each Corbit embedded the meaning behind his or her food-related actions into the pie itself, and as the embodiment of this meaning, the pie communicated it back to other household members.

More specifically, this project will address four aspects of the Corbit household's daily life, into which a study of the mincemeat pie yields particular insight. First, in obtaining the mincemeat pie, each household member had access to different social and spatial spheres. William, the head of household, typically accessed the commercial food market in Cantwell's Bridge and beyond, while Mary, his wife and mistress of the house, primarily accessed the interiors of both her own household and those of other women. Alice, the highest-ranking servant, had access to all people and spaces within the Corbit house and household, while lower ranking male and female servants most often worked in indoor and outdoor service spaces. Like access, division of labor is clearly manifested in the Corbits' food-related activities: each person's tasks were largely determined by both gender and relative position in the household hierarchy. Third, the pie sheds some light on how space was used in the house, and on and off the Corbits' property. While much information about their use of space can be gathered from the house and other documents, a study of the family's food-related patterns adds details and raises questions that may not

be obvious otherwise. Finally, food tells us something about how the Corbits interacted with other houses and local establishments. Food exchange between family members and friends, and frequent visits to town stores for ingredients reveal social connections and everyday activities that can otherwise be difficult to trace.

Rather than being clearly illustrated in the Corbits' treatment of one ingredient or activity, these factors and patterns materialize with each step the mincemeat pie's evolution. Thus, as each ingredient is traced first from the outside world to the Corbit property, and then around the property itself, a detailed picture of the Corbits' daily life, food-related and otherwise, will slowly become clearer. By the time the pie is served and the Corbits seat themselves around the table, their mincemeat will have defined and reaffirmed each person's roles within the household and connected him or her in a unique way to each of the other diners.

As with most historical studies this project is limited by available documentation. While many objects and written records have survived to document foodways in the 1802-1810 Corbit household, some major customary sources of evidence are missing. There is neither a period receipt book, nor a journal or other record of day-to-day activities within the household, and the few surviving women's letters focus on strictly social matters, rather than on household concerns. Likewise, no comprehensive record of household servants, their duties, or their wages exists for any time period. There are no early nineteenth-century shipping records for Cantwell's Bridge to document the foods they were obtaining from outside of town, and no modern archaeological evidence of food or food-related objects.

But since this study is not intended to be an exhaustive documentation of all foods procured and consumed by the Corbits, such traditional documents, while they would be helpful, are not absolutely necessary. Rather, the household's food-related social and spatial systems, and the meaning transmitted within them, may be reconstructed with information contained, often indirectly, in less traditional documents and objects. Since the Corbits obtained most of their income in business pursuits rather than agriculture, much of their food was procured through those business exchanges. Clues to their food-related systems abound in business letters and family ledgers, which record the activity of William's tannery, storehouses, and three freight shallops. These accounts document not only the food and servitude that the Corbits frequently received as payment, but also social contact and spatial movement that occurred in the process. The Corbits also purchased some food directly at stores in Cantwell's Bridge. Fortunately daybooks covering 1802 to 1810 remain for Outten Davis's general store, which was located within one block of the Corbit home. Through these records it is possible to trace what foods were generally purchased, rather than made, and who purchased them.

Other records document non-business foodways activity, especially that of women and servants. A large collection of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Corbit letters records a range of social acquaintances and patterns of movement, both within and outside of the house. Likewise, the appearance of the mansion and its surrounding property in the early nineteenth century is well documented by William's 1818 will and inventory, and by the extant house itself. The immediate property, including a group of outbuildings, indicates what kinds of food-related activities the Corbits conducted on their

own immediate property. Similarly, by analyzing how walls, doors, halls, and stairs divide and allocate space within the house, one may determine, without the help of a journal, the patterns of movement and social divisions that existed in the early nineteenth-century Corbit household. When these documents are combined with information about the pie's preparation, it is possible to reconstruct a fairly detailed model of who made up the household, how they moved about their physical and social environment, and what these actions implied.

Material culture food studies tend to examine the objects used to prepare, store, serve, and dispose of food. Catalogs and some edited and reprinted period receipt books thoroughly document these objects' appearances, in addition to how and when they were used. Other material culture studies apply this specific, object-based information to food-related aspects of social history. Research on tea ceremonies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for instance, has provided wonderful insight into issues such as the rise of popular refinement and the China trade. Studies of tea tables, tea services, and other tea equipage have been central to understanding the place of tea and tea ceremonies in everyday life. Without the help of these food-related objects, significant details about this important social activity would be lost.

But while such studies of food-related objects yield valuable insights into social history, food itself as an object has unique properties that make it an even broader window into American's past. Because the nature of food so significantly affects the way it functions as an object, its properties must be considered when designing a methodology for cultural food study. Four traits are particularly influential in this study. First, food is

essential for human survival. Unlike some objects, which may be used by some people and not others, everyone must have contact with food in some capacity. While one person may procure food and not prepare it, another person may be involved in every phase from feeding a pig, to butchering it, to smoking its sausage. This necessary but varying interaction makes every person within a household an essential character with a unique role.

Second, food is an ephemeral object and is not the same today as it was in the early nineteenth century. It is an object that no longer exists materially. While period cooking tools, receipts, and inventories yield basic information, such as what people ate, where foods came from, and how they were prepared, historians cannot recreate the food itself. When analyzing a dish like the mincemeat pie, one must acknowledge that its ingredients were not the same 200 years ago as they are today, even if they bear the same name. Mrs. Corbit's butter, for instance, was procured from and processed by different sources and methods than our modern machines and factories. These actions affected the butter's material characteristics in ways we cannot duplicate today. One may thus construct a more accurate picture of historic food by taking these differences into consideration, and by focusing more on the meaning people associated with their food than on the material characteristics of the food itself.

A third aspect of food is that it is a dynamic object. Unlike some objects, which are made into a particular form and intended to remain in that completed state, food constantly undergoes physical and chemical change, and is manipulated over space, time, and social networks. Most food begins as an independent living being, which is butchered

or harvested and processed into an ingredient by any number of people. From that point it may be smoked, baked, milled, churned, or made into an assortment of food products, which are then eaten, stored, or recombined with other ingredients or food products. Eventually, most foods are prepared in a final form for consumption, but they remain in that state only a moment before being disposed of in some manner. Thus, rather than studying food at an arbitrarily selected point in its life, such as its brief time as a completed dish, it may be more accurate to study how it gained and lost meaning as a changing object.

Finally, food acquires meaning primarily through people's interaction with it. Human initiative propels food through its multi-staged lifecycle, but our actions are intended to do more than simply process a material object. The ways in which we acquire, prepare, consume, and dispose of food can both contain and communicate a variety of meanings. If Mrs. Corbit needs more salt for the pie crust and sends Mr. Corbit to Outten Davis's store to get it, she and William are communicating and reaffirming the nature of their relationship through their interaction with the salt: Mrs. Corbit uses the salt in the kitchen with her house servants, while Mr. Corbit acquires it outside the home via a financial transaction. This performative aspect is more ephemeral than the food itself, but, because of the food's dynamic nature, it is essential for understanding how food functions as a meaningful object.

Based on these aspects of food's essential nature—its ubiquity, ephemerality, dynamic nature, and dependence upon performance for meaning—one can most accurately reconstruct its meaning by understanding how it functioned in its original

context. Thus, as previously stated, this project will reconstruct the context in which the Corbits' food existed by tracing their food's journey through that context. The question remains, however, how one actually goes about extracting and determining food's meaning from its context. Bernard Herman, in *The Stolen House*, and Ian Hodder, in *Reading the Past*, propose complimentary methods for uncovering contextual meaning in objects of the past.³ Together their ideas suggest an appropriate approach to the study of historic food.

Herman makes a useful distinction between two common approaches to material culture scholarship. The first, which he calls "object centered" scholarship, includes studies that use objects and relevant documents to "explain the meaning of the object in and of itself."⁴ An object-centered study of silver teapot, for instance, may attempt to assign it an owner and a country or region of origin. It may note the teapot's wear marks and any repairs, and may locate any documents, such as bills of sale or advertisements, in which the teapot was mentioned. Such a study of a food-related objects yields much information about the object itself, but it does not place that object in an historical or cultural context. Since historical food no longer exists and must be studied in terms of its context, an object centered study of food as an object would be impossible.

An "object driven" study, however, attempts to use the object as a vehicle for discovering its larger cultural context: it "take[s] the evidence and questions generated by material culture and extend[s] them into a broader inquiry aimed at the interpretation of society and culture."⁵ An object driven study of the silver teapot could extend the observance of wear marks into an inquiry about how and why the it was used, and by

whom, and what that information reveals about the people and culture that used it. In asking and answering these broader questions, the object-driven study both places the object in a context, and reveals new information about that context. As such, it is a fruitful method for studying both food and the people who made and consumed it.

But how does one actually use context to recover the meaning of historic objects? Hodder suggests looking at objects as symbols, whose meaning is defined by their context. Although he is writing from an archaeological perspective, Hodder's observations apply to a material culture study of food as well. As with any object that is manipulated by humans, food has a symbolic nature: people assign meaning to it, and that meaning is communicated by the food to others who come into contact with it. Although meanings can change with circumstances, a group of people who share a particular context, such as members of a household, town, or country, usually understand a common meaning. In his chapter entitled "Contextual Archaeology," Hodder defines context as "the connecting or interweaving of things in a particular situation or group of situations."⁶ One might, therefore, begin to uncover food's meaning by reconstructing its symbolic role within the context, or the interweaving of things, in the Corbit household.

Hodder suggests that an object's symbolic role can be determined by asking questions about two types of meaning: "the structured system of functional inter-relationships and the structured content of ideas and symbols."⁷ In other words, according to the first type, the Corbits gave their food meaning in relation to their economic and social structures, labor organization, and human and physical environment, among other factors. To understand this meaning one must consider questions like who was part of the

household? What was the social hierarchy within the family? What was the physical landscape of the house? Who acquired and prepared food? But Hodder contends that this first type of meaning does not alone adequately address issues of context. The second type asks, what are the ideas behind material symbols? And how do they “play a part in structuring society?”⁸ One must thus consider what a food like a mincemeat pie, as a symbol, means to the people who understand it, and how that meaning structures their social relationships. In creating the pie, do Corbit household members follow any patterns that relate to broader social ideologies, such as gender roles or religious traditions? If so, how are those ideologies reflected in their actions and interactions? And how does the pie, in turn, symbolically embody and reaffirm those ideologies? These questions and the answers revealed through the Corbits’ mincemeat pie activities, prove that food, as an object, does indeed provide a uniquely powerful window into the everyday lives of early Americans.

THE MINCEMEAT PIE

A tall case clock in the dining room strikes two as the Corbits' young female servant moves a mincemeat pie from the sideboard to a mahogany dining table.⁹

Throughout the morning, rays of low January sunlight have filtered through the room's east windows and made their slow daily journey over the East India carpet. Now, as a steady, diluted afternoon light settles upon the room, the servant pulls a Windsor chair from its usual place at Mr. Corbit's desk and bookcase, across the room to the table, making a place for five diners. With this final preparation completed, she exits through a doorway to the adjacent kitchen wing, where an older female servant is putting away some unused ingredients. Upon closing the dining room door behind her, she leaves the table fully set with the makings of a casual winter dinner for the Corbits, their visiting son and daughter-in-law, and one of William and Pennell's many business acquaintances.

(Figure 1)

In this fleeting moment of stillness between the servants' bustle of preparation and the diners' descent upon their meal, every dish of their hearty winter meal sits carefully placed on the mahogany table. The menu for this hypothetical meal is based on research in Clarissa Dillon's *So Serve it Up: Eighteenth-Century English Foodways in Eastern Pennsylvania*. Dillon lays out a month by month menu based on period meal

descriptions of eastern Pennsylvania. For January she selects a dinner given in the Philadelphia home of German immigrant Jacob Hiltzheimer and a business acquaintance, George Nelson. Although Hiltzheimer was likely to have incorporated some German elements into his foodways, they were probably tempered by his English Quaker wife. Dillon states that the menu for this January meal reflects a casual meal, rather than a carefully planned dinner-party. Her menu is as follows:

Beef Steaks OR Beef Steaks in Ale OR Beef Steaks in Wine OR Beef a la Mode
Mince Pie
Stewed Cabbages, Sausages, AND Pease Pudding
Beet Root Fried in Butter
Oatmeal Flummery¹⁰

Since this meal was probably similar to an informal dinner in the Corbit household, it is the basis for their reconstructed January meal.

To return to the scene, the table is set with slipware plates and serving dishes, a popular choice of well-to-do rural Americans in the early nineteenth century. Shards in two locations on the Corbit property suggests the types of ceramic tableware the family possessed. According to the restoration report for the Corbit-Sharp house, shards of “old slip ware, old Leeds, Canton, [and] Lowestoft” were found under the basement’s brick floor.¹¹ Shards, including “creamware shard [and] ceramic shard” were also found in an area where another house, possibly Pennel Corbit’s, is suspected to have stood.¹² At each setting the girl has placed a glass tumbler, a linen napkin, and a set of the family’s silver flatware.¹³ In accordance with late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century fashion, an odd number of food items, have been served.¹⁴ The serving dishes filled with food form a symmetrical pattern on the table: large platters rest on either end, while smaller platters

mirror each other as closely as possible at the table's center.¹⁵ Along with the mincemeat pie, there is pumpkin soup, Appoquinimink sausages fried with apples, and beef steaks broiled over coals with butter, salt, and pepper.¹⁶ These heavy meat dishes are accompanied by green peas that have been boiled with butter, salt and sugar, after having spent the winter preserved in lard.¹⁷ Long winter beets, boiled, sliced, and seasoned with butter, pepper and salt, also join the feast after many months in the cool root cellar.¹⁸ For a sweet touch there is rice flummery, a paste which was prepared a day ahead of time and pressed into two dozen peach kernel moulds. Just in time for the meal, the moulds have been flipped over onto several small plates and sprinkled with sugar and nutmeg.¹⁹ Momentarily, hungry diners who have not eaten since breakfast will adjourn from their various locations within the house and meet around this heavily laden table to enjoy the fruits of their labors.

Although tracing the origins of each dish on the Corbits' table would provide a more complete picture of their foodways and food's meaning within the household, the scope of this paper only allows thorough exploration of one element of their meal. The journal of Martha Ogle Forman of Rose Hill plantation in Maryland verifies that mincemeat pies were a common fall and winter dish among wealthy Mid-Atlantic families. On November 12, 1814, for instance, she records making "mince pies" and "oyster pies" in expectation of her husband's return from a business trip.²⁰ In addition, unlike the other dishes, the mincemeat pie includes an unusually wide range of ingredients, whose preparation requires the efforts of every member of the household. As such, it is an ideal dish by which to trace the meaning of Corbit household foodways.

When selecting a mincemeat pie receipt upon which to build this study, it is important to select a period receipt, since nineteenth-century mincemeat included beef and other ingredient that have been eliminated from most of today's versions. Even then, a period receipt can only be used as a guideline, since such a common and practical dish would have probably been prepared frequently, and most likely by memory.²¹ Elizabeth Ellicott Lea, a distant Quaker cousin of the Corbits, did, however, include a recipe for "Rich Mincemeat Pie" and "Pie Crust" in *Domestic Cookery, Useful Receipts, and Hints to Young Housekeepers*, first published in 1845.²² Her recipes, as follows, will provide the basic framework for this study:

Rich Mince Pies.

Take four pounds of beef, boiled and chopped fine; pick and chop three pounds of suet, wash two pounds of currants, and one of raisins; grate the peel of two lemons, and put in the juice; pound a spoonful of dried orange peel, slice an ounce of citron, and slice twelve large apples; mix these together with three pounds of sugar, half a pint of wine, and the same of brandy—and sweet cider to make it a proper thickness; put in mace and nutmeg to your taste. If the cider is not sweet, you must put in more sugar before the pies are baked; cut in several places in the top of each with a pair of scissors.

Pie Crust

Sift a pound and a half of flour, and take out a quarter for rolling; cut in it a quarter of a pound of lard, mix it with water, and roll it out; cut half a pound of butter, and put it in at two rollings with the flour that was left out.

For making the bottom crust of pies, cut half a pound of lard into a pound of flour, with a little salt; mix it stiff, and grease the plates before you make pies; always make your paste in a cold place, and bake it soon.

Some persons prefer mixing crust with milk instead of water.²³

In *So Serve it Up* Clarissa Dillon reports that mincemeat pies could be made in advance and stored in a cold place up for to six weeks. Or, if the crust was not yet

prepared, the filling could be stored in a crock until it was ready to be used. Many ingredients, in fact, required individual preparation before they could be added to the filling.²⁴ Therefore, if the Corbits were consuming this hearty pie in January, they could have made the filling in November, if not before. Furthermore, many of the ingredients required individual preparation even before they could be combined to make the filling.

Although the publication of this recipe occurred over thirty years after the Corbits' mincemeat pie would have been made, Lea's recipes are a compilation of old family recipes that had been used for several generations. Being members of the same family network, and having similar economic means and geographic location, Elizabeth Lea and Mary Corbit were likely to have had access to similar foods and preparation techniques. Likewise, as Quakers, the women may have shared a common ideology toward food and foodways. William Woys Weaver, whose modern introduction to Lea's book is the most thorough assessment of Mid-Atlantic Quaker foodways at present, claims that, like their taste in other aspects of the material world, Quakers' food preferences tended be influenced by their preference for simplicity and common sense.²⁵ According to Weaver, "life in Delaware brought Elizabeth Lea into direct contact with the large, almost homogeneous Quaker communities [of northern Delaware and southeastern Pennsylvania] . . . it was from this area that a great many of her recipes seem to originate."²⁶

THE HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

Since the Corbit household generally contained between ten and fifteen members, the creation of even a single dish required a tremendous cast of characters. Like most nineteenth-century households, the Corbits' shifted members fairly frequently, as parents, servants, children, and other relations were born, died, went to school, hired or let go. Thus, rather than attempting to reconstruct each incarnation of the household unit between 1802 and 1810, this study will focus on the household's primary members through the course of those eight years. Available evidence indicates that William, Mary Cowgill, and their nurse Alice Murray each played significant roles, which the contributions of the Corbit children and temporary servants were more sporadic and harder to document. Since the general Corbit family history has already been told well in numerous sources, these individual profiles will touch upon it only briefly where necessary. (Figure 2) The focus will instead be upon the major social, religious, or geographical influences that shaped the life of each household member, and how those influences manifest themselves in foodways activities.

William Corbit, the long-lived household patriarch, was a tanner, landholder, shallop owner, and real estate investor, who married four times and fathered thirteen children. His key contribution to the household's foodways between 1802-1810 was access to the outside market. As the oldest male and primary breadwinner, he had

financial control over the household, and thus came into contact with social and business acquaintances in Cantwell's Bridge, and as far away as Philadelphia and New York.²⁷

Although he was never poor, William earned his unusually wide social and financial access over the course of many years. Since his father, Daniel II, divided his land between his first two sons, William, the third living son, was required to learn a trade rather than take over the family farm. Thus in 1765, when he was 20 years old, William moved to Philadelphia to spend two years learning tanning from his cousin William Bettle. Although he was not yet of outstanding means, William undoubtedly became familiar with high-style social and material world of urban Philadelphia during this time, and brought its influences back with him to rural Delaware. Upon returning to Cantwell's Bridge in 1767, he was quick to set up a tannery just upstream from the town's toll bridge. His head for business, in addition to the area's excellent supply of hides and Spanish bark, both necessary ingredients for tanning, helped his tannery prosper. Almost as quickly as he established his business, he began to build the urban-style Georgian mansion in which we find him at the time of our meal.²⁸

William's life in this monumental establishment was a long one, during which he married four wives, fathered thirteen children, and partook in numerous business ventures. Soon after returning to Delaware, but before building his mansion, William married his first wife, Elizabeth Empson, the daughter of a local family. Little is known about her, however, for she died young and the couple had no children. By 1773 William had married again, this time to Mary Pennell, a wealthy, educated miller's daughter, who was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, and moved to Appoquinimink in 1769. Shortly

after their marriage William's new mansion was ready, and they lived there together until Mary's death in 1783. (Figure 3) Their ten year marriage was prosperous: Mary bore four children, three of whom survived more than one year, and William purchased 300 acres of additional farm and marshland in the Appoquinimink area, for a combined total of over 500 acres.²⁹

When Mary died, William was in his mid-thirties with three young sons, Pennell, Edward and Thomas, a mansion, a healthy business, significant landholdings, and a great deal of money. Not surprisingly, he married again in less than two years, this time to 26 year old Sarah Fisher of Duck Creek, Delaware. Sarah, the daughter of a wealthy merchant and cousin to the elite Fishers of Philadelphia, was a popular young lady whose social connections included the Delaware Valley's most elite Quaker families. Though it lasted only five years, this marriage probably strengthened William's Philadelphia business connections and added social ties as well. When Sarah died in 1789, only a few weeks after the birth of their son William Fisher, William was again left a widower with extensive assets and three surviving children.

This foodways study is focused, however, upon the household that formed during the next phase of William's life. Two years after Sarah Fisher's death in 1791, William, at age 43, entered his fourth and final marriage, this time to thirty year-old Mary Cowgill Corbit of Kent County, Delaware. Beginning in 1794, William, Mary, their five children, and their servant Alice left Cantwell's Bridge for an eight year stay at a large farm in Passyunk, Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia. Although the reason for their move is unclear, it is possible that William wanted to be close to his older sons, who

were attending boarding school in Philadelphia at this time. While managing this farm and renting sections to tenants, William continued to direct the family tannery in Cantwell's Bridge. His oldest son Pennell, having been trained as a tanner in Philadelphia like his father, remained in Delaware to oversee the tannery's day-to-day operations. During the winter of 1800 the Corbits moved from Passyunk into the city, where they continued to live for another two years. But in 1802 William again moved his family, this time back to "William's Castle" in Cantwell's Bridge.³⁰ Although they remained in Cantwell's Bridge for the rest of William's and Mary's lives, the younger children still served apprenticeships and attended boarding schools in Philadelphia. The family's strong connection with the city was thereby maintained for many years.

By 1802 William had reached the pinnacle of his social and financial career. He had a prosperous tanning operation, three storehouses for rent, scattered tenant farms and rental houses, three shallops that ran between Cantwell's Bridge and Philadelphia, and social and business connections throughout the Delaware Valley. His income was substantial: as he once told his son William Fisher, he "could not possibly ever stand in need of money."³¹ As his role in acquiring mincemeat pie ingredients will illustrate, William provided his household access to items available in the commercial market or through business-related trade.

Unfortunately, there is little surviving information on Mary Cowgill Corbit, William's last wife and mistress of the house from 1791 to 1845. Based on the available evidence, her Quaker background may have been her most significant contribution to household foodways, since it tied her to a large group of closely knit group of women

throughout the Mid-Atlantic states. As noted earlier, Quaker women shared and exchanged foods they produced in their own households, as well as food-related ideas and techniques. Thus, just as William provided the Corbit household with access to food goods in the business market, Mary provided access to a network of other households, and the ideas, recipes, and foods of the women who ran them.

Family letters and wills provide some information about Mary's basic history and major influences in her life. She was the daughter of John and Mary Cowgill, who were prominent Quaker landholders near Little Creek, in Kent County, Delaware.³² After marrying William in 1791, she added five children to the surviving three from his previous marriages, and thus managed the household during its most populous time. After 27 years of marriage, William died and left her his mansion, where she continued to live for another 27 years.

Unlike William, whose career as a Quaker was often tenuous, Mary was raised in an unusually loyal Quaker family. Her father, John Cowgill, was so dedicated to Quaker ideals that he faced persecution by neighbors and the government during the Revolutionary War, rather than act against his beliefs. His decision affected the entire family: their horse, cattle, sheep, and grain were stolen, and Mary and her family were forced to witness John Cowgill's capture and public humiliation by soldiers. As Mary later recollected in a letter to her brother, their persecution affected all aspects of the Cowgills' lives: "the miller to whom he was accustomed to sending his grain refused grinding for him for fear the mill house would be torn down—& the Teacher was forbid teaching his children-When we went to bed at night we did not know what would be the

issue before day, & in that way we lived for several years.”³³ Records show that Mary continued this early devotion to Quakerism throughout her life: her letters express deep religious sentiment and respect for Quaker rules, as well as an active interest in the lives of her many Quaker friends, both men and women.

The connection between foodways and Quaker social networks is wonderfully illustrated in an exchange of letters between Mary and her mother in 1796. At the time Mary was living near Philadelphia and old Mrs. Cowgill was down in Kent County, Delaware, near many of Mary’s female relatives. On February 10 Mary wrote:

We propose this year to making a garden and are in want of every kind of rutes and seeds as nothing will go amiss, if thee and my sisters will be so kind as to procure me som and send up by Wilson Buck the first running of the Vesels . . . I shall take it very kind. Purhaps Cosin Sally & Cosen Betsy Cowgill may hav som to share. We cant git hear with out paing a very extravagant price for them.

A month later, on March 23, Mrs. Cowgill responded:

The[e] informs me the[e] is in wont of Garden Ruts and Seads my being porely has prevent my gitting anney up this trip [here the paper is torn] be out of sesen next for planting. . .³⁴

This single exchange documents both a system of close relationships between members of Mary’s family, and the foodsharing network that operated within it. In the pursuit of “rutes and seeds” she extends a request to her mother, her sisters, and two of her female cousins throughout north and central Delaware. Such an intricate and far-reaching network indicates that Mary’s access to foods outside the house may have been as extensive as William’s.

While Mary has left no journals and few letters containing explicit food-related information, her role in food-related activities within the house was undoubtedly similar to that of other Mid-Atlantic women. As men, like William became more concerned with the market and business success in the early nineteenth century, women, like Mary, became more involved in implementing domestic economy.³⁵ In addition to maintaining close ties with other households, she would have been responsible for the competent management of her own. As mistress of the house, she directed servants, oversaw food processing and preparation, and cooked much of the food herself, all while making sure these activities were conducted as efficiently as possible.

Since the Corbit children were sent away to various boarding schools and apprenticeships during their youths, it is difficult to determine where each child was at any given time. It will thus suffice to identify each of the dependent Corbit children and tell what is known of their whereabouts between 1802 and 1810. The children's few recorded foodways activities seem to have been largely determined by gender and age. The Corbit boys who were living in Philadelphia seem to have adopted their father's role of accessing the city's markets for the family. On the other hand, the girls, when not away at school, would have begun to learn domestic skills from their mother and the household servants after age five, so that they could keep their own houses efficiently after marriage.³⁶

When the Corbits moved back to Cantwell's Bridge from Philadelphia, Pennell was William's only independent child. In 1807, at age 31, he married Mary Clark, known as "Molly," whose father was governor of Delaware between 1817 and 1820.³⁷ Until Molly's death in 1814, they lived together their daughters, Sarah (b. 1810) and Mary

(b. 1812), in another house on William's property.³⁸ Although the precise nature of their interaction with William's household is unclear, it is possible that Molly and Mrs. Corbit shared tasks and outbuildings, and perhaps some servants.³⁹ The next oldest, William Fisher, was born in 1789 and had been educated at the Westtown, or Weston, Boarding School outside of West Chester, Pennsylvania.⁴⁰ By 1809 he was a merchant of produce and other goods, and traveled on business between Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Maryland.⁴¹ Though undocumented, it is possible that he occasionally supplied the household with produce from his business transactions. John Cowgill, the oldest of William's children with his last wife, was born in 1792 and, like his brothers, had received at least part of his education in Philadelphia.⁴² By 1807 he was apprenticed in Birmingham, Pennsylvania, near his Brinton relatives, and like William Fisher, probably had access to goods at distant markets.⁴³ Next in line was Sarah, who was born in 1795. Little documentation exists for her between 1802 and 1810, although it is likely that she too attended boarding school in the area and helped her mother when at home. Daniel, born in 1796, was away at the Friends boarding school in Smyrna during part of this time, and Mary, born in 1798, was also away at school in Wilmington.⁴⁴ At least two children, Thomas (b. 1803) and Rachel (1808), were certainly at home and under the care of nurse Alice Murray.

Since the Corbits had enough money to send their children to boarding school, most of the household's food-related labor fell to their servants. Without a daily journal it is difficult to determine the precise nature of the Corbit family's relationship with their servants. Joan Jensen's study of Mid-Atlantic farm women between 1750 and 1850 does,

however, shed some light on common trends in the area. Jensen suggests that employer-servant relationships were part of a community effort in which poor folks were willing to work for their wealthy neighbors as part of a mutual economic relationship. In the families she studied, female servants assisted their employers in carrying out a wide variety of tasks, from churning butter to sewing clothes, in exchange for necessary cash. This relationship satisfied the wealthy employer's need for help with the heavy labor burdens that accompanied large households, and also provided the servant with money to live. Even after her extensive research, Jensen has not been able to determine whether relationships between wealthy Mid-Atlantic families and their household servants were as strict as those found between employers and employees outside the home. She does state, however, that their class-determined interactions may have been considered natural and necessary, and therefore generally acceptable:

[Employer-employee relationships] seem to have been part of an ebb and flow of economic and social life, tied by both work relationships and other relationships that existed. Class differences and conflict may have also been an accepted and integral part of this community, merely muffled by the dependence that individuals had on one another.⁴⁵

By hiring servants from a variety of social and economic levels within the Cantwell's Bridge community, the Corbits clearly joined this intricate web of symbiotic servant-employer relationships.

Although it is unclear how many servants the Corbits had at any specific time, one can draw an approximate picture from William's will and inventory, letters, family ledgers, and the Outten Davis store accounts. Since these documents span from 1795 to 1818, they provide an idea of the kinds of servants the Corbits employed between 1802

and 1810. The Corbits employed a range of servants, male and female, black and white, whose food-related work took them both in and out of the house, and on and off the property. Like most wealthy Mid-Atlantic families, they had at least one year-round, live-in female servant.⁴⁶ The Corbits' primary servant, Alice Murray, probably joined the family shortly after the death of Sarah Fisher, when William suddenly found himself with no wife and three children under the age of thirteen. But while the ever-present Alice was much-loved and well documented, most of the Corbits' help appears to have come from temporary or day-servants, or from others whose presence in the household was too brief to have been recorded in any detail.

Alice was hired as an indentured servant from Ireland and stayed with the family almost thirty years, until her death in 1818.⁴⁷ Alice probably provided the household with a supporting framework for all domestic activities. She had physical access to almost all spaces, and social contact with everyone as a caretaker and housekeeper. Likewise, she would have been Mrs. Corbit's right-hand-woman; while Mrs. Corbit directed food activities, Alice would have carried out a variety of tasks and supervised lower-ranking servants.⁴⁸

But, while her official position was a combination of nurse and housekeeper, Alice was considered more a family member than a servant. Perhaps the most candid description of her role in the family appears in William Fisher's memoir:

we however got another lady in the family about the Same age, and between the two my life was providentially saved . . . It may be considered as trifling with ladies who do not marry to introduce them but I must say that my nurses were exemplary throughout their lives, One of them [Alice] having lived in our family until her death Say at least 30 years.⁴⁹

Almost every letter between the Corbit parents and children includes some reference to “Alcy,” as the family affectionately called her. John and Mary respectively conclude letters home with “remember my love to mother [and] Alcy” and “give my love to Mother and Father and alic and the rest of the family.”⁵⁰ Even friends of the family included her in their correspondence, as when Mary Liston concluded her 1806 letter to Mary with “My Love to the[e] & alce.”⁵¹ Her position as one of the family was affirmed in William’s 1818 will, with the provision that together his children shall pay “Annually Without Defalcation” cash amounting to “Fifty Dollars yearly for Her Mentainance.” Sadly, however, Alice died within only a few months, shortly before William himself passed away, at the age of seventy-one.⁵²

Given the family’s love for Alice and her apparent place as one of the family, it is no surprise that she seems to have born a central role in the household. She was frequently allowed to go to the Davis store and purchase sewing supplies under William Corbit’s name, where even the shopkeeper identified her by her nickname “Alsey,” “Alsa,” “Alse” or “Alsea.”⁵³ Such an arrangement implies that the Corbits trusted her to assume some financial responsibility within the household. She was also given a bedchamber on the second floor of the main house, with direct access via doors and stairways to the garret chambers, kitchen addition, basement, other second floor bedchambers, the main staircase, and thus the formal first floor rooms. This physical access to all areas of the house parallels Alice’s social access: she was nurse to the children, assistant to Mary, and, as William Fisher’s account indicates, a dear friend to William.

While no direct references to Alice's part in foodways exists, her role in producing the mincemeat pie would have reflected her social and spatial centrality with the household. Like other year-round, live-in female servants in the Mid-Atlantic, Alice's role included a great deal of variety. As Mrs. Corbit's primary assistant she carried out tasks that Mary could not, or would not, have performed herself, such as some preserving and daily cooking. Since Alice was growing old by 1802, however, it is likely that at least one other female servant assisted her and Mary in domestic foodways activities.

Other than Alice, the family's help is sparsely documented. Although most servants can be neither named nor distinguished as live-in or day help, records do suggest what types of servants the Corbits were likely to have had. Outten Davis recorded the existence, if not the names, of Corbit servants in his store's daybook whenever they made purchases for the household. If anyone but William himself bought something on his account, Davis noted that person's identity in the margin. He consistently identified main members of the household by name or by their relationship to William with titles like "his wife," "Alce," "William Jr.," "his daughter," and "their Clark." Two others, referred to as "their girl" and "their woman," also make frequent appearances. While it is possible that "their woman" refers to Alice Murray, "their girl" seems to be live-in or day help within the household. While the woman, like Alice, always purchased fabrics and sewing supplies, the girl only purchased food items such as sugar and sherry.⁵⁴

Family ledgers also indicate that tannery patrons sometimes paid the Corbits' with their own "servitude," or with that of their slaves or servants. This labor usually lasted only a few days and included tasks such as cutting and hauling wood and other sorts of

manual labor.⁵⁵ The Corbits also hired members of the community for temporary help, especially during harvest time. In a June 12, 1800, letter to Pennell, for instance, William suggests that his son “hire some person” to help him transport corn, as “I expect thy hands wont have time to do it.”⁵⁶ In addition, between 1789 and 1818 William purchased at least two indentured servants: one was Alice Murray, and the other was a black man named Abraham Darrey, who was valued at \$150.00 in William’s 1818 inventory, with “five years five moths & 18 days” left to serve. While Alice worked in the house, Abraham probably worked outside around the property, maintaining outbuildings and caring for animals among other general care-taking tasks.⁵⁷

While these manual tasks and the people who performed them may not seem directly connected to Corbit foodways, they were an important part of the household’s foodways system. The Corbits earned a large part of their income by selling their agricultural products, such as wheat. Thus, those who helped with the harvest were also helping to earn the capital with which food was purchased. Also, since the family acquired large quantities of some foods, such as meat and flour, primarily through the tannery, day laborers and hired hands who physically transported tannery goods, and possibly food payments, were a basic part of the system. The firewood that was chopped and hauled by these laborers was likewise used for cooking in the house’s hearths and stoves, and for running the smokehouse. Thus, while individual day laborers came and went with great frequency, as a group they played a continual and essential role within the Corbit foodways system.

The circumstances of one last group of Corbit servants remains a bit of a mystery, yet their role in the household foodways system may have been significant. During the family's stay in Philadelphia between 1799 and 1801, William wrote frequently to Pennell about business and personal matters, and often mentioned that he was sending the letters via a servant he alternately called "Black Joseph," "Joseph," "Joseph with the cart," "Joseph Corbit," and "Jos Corbit."⁵⁸ These names indicate that Joseph was a black man, and that at some point he had taken the Corbits' surname as his own. Likewise between 1804 and 1805, Outten Davis recorded several purchases made by "Joseph Corbit, Negro," or "Corbets joseph."⁵⁹ Although Joseph's history is unclear, his name and race suggest that he may have joined the Corbits during a past era of William's life. In his younger days, William had disobeyed Quaker rules and purchased a slave, for which he was banned from Meeting in 1772.⁶⁰ While William had long since released the slave by the 1790s, Joseph's race and last name suggests that he may have been related to the controversial Corbit slave, or perhaps was the former slave himself.

But the Davis store records indicate that William had connections to additional black Corbits in Cantwell's Bridge. Between 1804 and 1807 the Davis accounts also list "Aron Corbit," "Juda Corbit," and "George Corbit," all of whom are identified as "Negroes" and appear to be servants of William or Pennell, or both. Other than an unnamed "Negro" who made occasional purchases on Pennell's account, Joseph, Aron, Juda, and George are the only blacks associated with the Corbit name in the store records.⁶¹ While a definite relationship between Joseph, George, Aron and Juda cannot be determined, their purchases and buying habits suggest that, in spite of their masculine-

sounding names, Aron and Juda may have been women. Joseph and George consistently buy rum, brandy, and “spirits,” or items such as “shues,” “coating,” and a “trunk,” Aron and Juda buy only fabrics and women’s clothing.⁶² Likewise, on January 10, 1805, Aron purchased ½ yard muslin on Joseph’s account, at the Davis store. This entry not only suggests that Aron was a woman, but that she and Joseph were members of the same household, of which Joseph was the head. The presence of women indicates that the black Corbits may have been a family in themselves, the members of which were all employed, at least part-time, by William’s and Pennell’s households.

In his article “The Corbit-Sharp House Family Circle” Horace Hotchkiss hypothesizes that the Corbits’ “Negro servants doubtless included a cook and housemaid.”⁶³ While he does not support this claim with any documentary evidence, it is possible that Joseph, George, Aron, and Juda filled such positions within the Corbit household. Given the number of people in their family, the Corbits probably would have required a regular serving staff that was larger than just Alice, a girl, and Abraham Dorsey. If Joseph, George, Aron, and Juda were indeed regular servants in the Corbit household, their food-related tasks would likely have included the most laborious aspects of food preparation. Like Abraham, the man would have been responsible for maintenance of buildings and animals, in addition to hauling goods from place to place.⁶⁴ Mrs. Corbit would have assigned the women to daily labors, like preserving and cooking meals, while she herself did the baking and preparation of specialty dishes.

GETTING FOOD TO THE PROPERTY

In the next two sections, the Corbits' food acquisition and preparation activities have been divided into those conducted off the property and those that took place on the property and in the house. This division follows a natural break in gender-determined labor patterns: Corbit men and male servants frequently ventured off the immediate property to acquire food through business exchanges, while women and female servants usually conducted food-related activity on the Corbit property or via household-to-household networks. Within these sections, the Corbits' means of procuring and processing individual ingredients will be examined in terms of what they reveal about the household's use of space off and on the property, their division of labor according to household status, and how they enforced varying amounts of spatial and social access within and outside the house.

This section addresses the Corbits' acquisition and transportation of ingredients from the place of procurement to their own property. As their treatment of beef and flour illustrates, men of the Corbit family proper procured foods in the commercial market, while their male servants actually transported it, once acquired, over land or water to the property. Their acquisition of citrus products, on the other hand, shows that while household men may have bought and transported foods, women often directed this process

by determining which foods were to be bought. Finally, the acquisition of alcohol, sugar, salt, and spices required for the mincemeat pie further illustrates women's role as directors of food acquisition, and documents how, unlike the broader business market, the local commercial food market was directly accessible to both Corbit men and female house servants.

The social and spatial geography of the Delaware Valley and Cantwell's Bridge itself largely determined how these ingredients were procured and transported. The area was home to the nation's largest population of Quakers, many of whom, like William Corbit, had migrated from the Pennsylvania mainland down into the Delaware peninsula. Philadelphia was the urban hub of this expansive religious community, and the source of many foods imported by and for Delaware Valley Quakers. (Figure 4) As Weaver points out, the Corbits' connections with Quaker Philadelphia would have enabled them to access an unusually wide variety of foods:

Quaker shipping in Wilmington and Philadelphia kept tables within the Quaker network well stocked with things unobtainable in many parts of the country, such as fresh pineapples from the Caribbean, Seville oranges, and winter grapes from the Canary Islands, even when Philadelphia grocers went without.⁶⁵

Since the Corbits had social and business connections among Philadelphia's most prominent Quakers, they almost certainly had access to these unusual foods.

Despite the distance between these rich Philadelphia markets and Cantwell's Bridge, travel between the two points was fairly easy by land or water. Family letters indicate that the Corbits planned trips between Cantwell's Bridge and Philadelphia a few weeks in advance.⁶⁶ While people often traveled by carriage, letters, miscellaneous goods

and food were usually transported via shallow-draft vessels, called sloops or shallops, that ran on the Delaware River and Appoquinimink Creek.⁶⁷ Except in the coldest months, shallops like those owned by William took two or three days to make a round trip between Cantwell's Bridge and Philadelphia. Thus, by land or by water, foods and other goods in Philadelphia were rarely more than a week away from the Corbits' doorstep.

In addition to carrying miscellaneous items for townspeople, the shallops supported a prosperous grain industry that brought Cantwell's Bridge much of its early nineteenth-century wealth. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, central Delaware's rich farmlands made it one of America's foremost grain-producing regions. Inland farmers relied on little river towns like Cantwell's Bridge for their direct access to Philadelphia by water. At harvest time, farmers loaded their wagons with wheat, corn, barley, and other grains, and drove to the wharves at Cantwell's Bridge. Here they either left their grain in storehouses or loaded it onto shallops for a journey down the Appoquinimink to the Delaware, and up to Philadelphia. As the owner of a plantation, storehouses and shallops, William Corbit was at the center of this prosperous commercial enterprise. Like other grain centers on the peninsula, such as Duck Creek, Little Creek and Newport, Cantwell's Bridge was a small, but wealthy and well-connected town in the heart of rural Delaware. (Figures 5 & 6)

In addition to sponsoring Delaware's grain industry, the town itself was home to many small businesses and even more farmers. During the early nineteenth century, Main Street formed the town's residential and commercial backbone, with some businesses and homes branching out on either side. (Figure 7) On its northwest end, Main Street ran over

the Appoquinimink via Cantwell's toll bridge, and was thus connected to the river's wharves and storehouses. Further to the southeast, in town, it was lined by at least two general stores, belonging to Outten Davis and David Wilson, and several brick mansions. William's mansion stood just off Main Street facing north, and was separated from the street by Wilson's store to the west. His tannery, one of the town's largest business establishments, stood just down river from the bridge, to the east of town.

Census information, along with the Davis store's daybooks, record the identities of many townspeople and area farmers, and thus give a general idea of the town's demography. According to the census of 1800, Cantwell's Bridge was made up of 211 people who lived in twenty-five houses. In addition to the Corbits, several other wealthy, old families with large landholdings lived in the area, including the Naudains, Cantwells, Wilsons, and Thomases. Although they do not specify how many slaves were in the area, records for St. Georges Hundred in 1800 indicate that of 1,765 total residents, 518, or about 29 percent were classified as "Negroes" or "Mulattoes."⁶⁸ Davis's daybook entries and William's own ledgers confirm, however, that slaves were a prominent part of the area population. Davis's records also indicate that many of his patrons were farmers from the surrounding area, who visited the store less frequently than townspeople and often paid with farm produce that was later purchased by non-farming members of Cantwell's Bridge.

The way in which the Corbits used these social and spatial networks to acquire beef shows that they a divided labor responsibilities according to gender and position in the household's hierarchy. Records show that the Corbit household acquired its beef in

two ways: by raising it or in exchange for the tannery's services. In a December 29, 1800, letter to Pennell, William states that he "should be glad to purchase fifty or sixty head of cattle during this winter if they could be got on reasonable terms."⁶⁹ Although the letter was written during the family's time in Philadelphia, and thus cannot confirm that they owned cattle while in Cantwell's Bridge, this brief statement does indicate how they divided responsibilities. As head of the household and its chief financier, William himself negotiated the initial purchase of livestock. He was not, however, above asking the advice of his oldest son, who was second-in-command. As this letter illustrates, William frequently writes to inform Pennell of his wishes and requests help in finding "reasonable terms" for which he would like to purchase. In procuring livestock, William and Pennell primarily would have contacted other farmers and businessmen in the Delaware Valley for the purpose of negotiating financial exchanges. They also would have interacted with their own servants as employers with employees, by assigning and supervising tasks.

Once the livestock was purchased, however, primary care was passed from the father and son to their male servants. While the men of poorer families would have cared for livestock themselves, wealthy Mid-Atlantic households like the Corbits' commonly employed hired men, like Abraham Dorsey, or Joseph and George Corbit, to tend and butcher livestock, and to transport the beef to the house's service areas.⁷⁰ Unlike William and Pennell, whose beef-related labor largely remained in business circles, the male servants' work kept them around the livestock and crops, in the fields and outbuildings, and on the roads in between. While fixing pens, feeding animals, planting and harvesting crops, and moving goods, they primarily would have contacted other servants, their

employer, and sometimes the farmers or businessmen whose goods they were transporting.

Since he was not primarily a farmer, however, William Corbit also procured some of the household's beef through tannery transactions. One tannery ledger shows that between August 6, 1897, and September 3, 1899, when William was still directing the tannery from Passyunk, the Corbits took in 251 ¼ pounds of beef.⁷¹ Like the men from whom William procured livestock, his tannery patrons were business acquisitions from throughout the area of varying economic levels. Once William procured beef from them either his own male servants, or the servants of his patrons, would have transported it to the Corbits property. In doing so, the servants, too, would have contacted these various businessmen, but in a very different capacity than their employers did. Since the hired men were performing a service task for William and his associates, rather than negotiating a business deal as equals, their labor only reaffirmed their roles as servants.

In acquiring their flour, Corbit household members affirmed labor divisions in much the same way as through their beef acquisition. Since Cantwell's Bridge was in the heart of America's grain producing region, the Corbits relied heavily upon local and personal resources for flour. Like beef, the Corbits raised some wheat on their own plantations, and possibly on land cultivated by their tenant farmers as well. Again, William's primary contribution was to address wheat-related business matters: he purchased seed for planting, watched the crops for damage, determined when plantings and harvests would take place, hired laborers, and directed where the wheat should be milled, stored and sold.⁷² When harvest time came, William hired temporary help from

town to assist the household's usual servants, but no available evidence indicates whether or not he physically participated in the harvest himself.⁷³ Instead, his hired help would have planted, maintained, harvested and transported grain to local mills or to William's storehouses.⁷⁴

While evidence of beef and flour procurement almost exclusively documents men's actions, records of citrus acquisition hint that women may have had a significant part in off-site food acquisition as well. The receipt calls for three types of citrus: the grated peel of two fresh lemons, one spoonful of dried orange peel, and an ounce of sliced citron. Since ripe citrus fruits are destroyed by temperatures under 30 degrees Fahrenheit, any citrus that the Corbits consumed was probably brought to the Mid-Atlantic region from warmer locations and sold by local vendors.⁷⁵ Despite this necessary importation, contemporary receipt books indicate that lemons, in particular, were widely used by Mid-Atlantic women for cooking, preserving, and making home remedies. Mrs. Lea, for instance, includes recipes for lemon brandy, lemon butter, lemon ice cream, lemon syrup, and "lemon mixture for a cough."⁷⁶ Women's reliance on citrus for so many aspects of foodways is reflected in the Corbits' methods of acquiring them. Records show that the family could easily obtain citrus both in Philadelphia and in Cantwell's Bridge itself.⁷⁷ But, while the family's men typically procured citrus in the business market, as they did beef and flour, Corbit women directed the acquisition of this coveted cooking ingredient more directly than that of the bulk agricultural items.

According to a transaction described in one family letter, the Corbits acquired citrus via immediate family members who were living in Philadelphia. The description of

this transaction provides a particularly clear example of how Corbit women, while not conducting business exchanges themselves, participated in market-level food acquisition. In a December 5, 1820, letter from Thomas Corbit in Philadelphia to his brother Daniel in Cantwell's Bridge, Thomas mentions his sister Sally's request for a lemon tree:

When I was down Sally said when I returned, I must get her a Lemmon tree which was to cost three dollars at least. I have thought since if I was to get a ½ barrel of Mackerel which would be but half a dollar more how much better it would be. But if she insists I will get it. But I should think Spring would be the best time to send it down as now it would be in danger of the frost.⁷⁸

Although the letter is a bit later than this project's focus, it articulates an acquisition system that probably existed throughout the 1802 to 1810 time period. As an apprentice in the bustling port city, seventeen year-old Thomas provided the household with a direct link to Philadelphia's extensive markets and shops. More specifically, he acted as a liaison between the Corbit women in Cantwell's Bridge, and Philadelphia's expansive business market.

This relationship between the Corbit women and their male counterparts is evident in the specific method by which the lemon tree was requested and, eventually, procured for the household. The letter itself is between two men: Daniel, the head of household and its finances at the time, and Thomas, the direct link to Philadelphia's markets. Other than his reference to the lemon tree, Thomas uses the correspondence only to address business and legal matters with which Daniel was involved. Even his account of the tree is given from an economic view point. The request, however, actually comes from their sister: a female member of the Corbit family proper. Although she is the one who desires the

lemon tree for their home, she goes through her brothers to procure it from the distant marketplace. While this arrangement simply may have been the most convenient, it may also indicate a larger food acquisition pattern. As we will see in locally acquired sugar and spices, the household's women appear to have more indirect than direct control over the family purse strings.

Like the division of labor between Corbit family men and their male servants, this differentiation in male and female access affects the people and places that each household member contacts. Thomas participates in Philadelphia's marketplace and seeks the advice and services of businessmen like his brother and lemon tree vendors, while Sally submits requests from their mansion in Cantwell's Bridge. This gendered division of business-related tasks can, however, be deceiving. While Corbit men did indeed participate more directly than women in business spheres outside the house, the Corbit women's direct access to foods outside the home was not limited. As we will see in the next ingredients, the way in which women accessed and processed food illustrates great mobility within their own household and in the households of other women.

Though apples were key ingredients in early American cooking, neither the Corbits' own ledgers, nor Davis's daybooks show that the household acquired apples through business exchanges. Since it is highly unlikely that the Corbits cooked without apples or apple products, one must turn to other possible methods of procurement.

Based on the household's non-commercial food evidence, at least some apples were probably procured through the Corbit women's interaction with other households. Since many families kept orchards as well as gardens, it is possible that the Corbits grew

their own apples. As Mrs. Corbit's letter requesting "rutes and seeds" suggests, the initial acquisition of trees and seeds, if not done commercially, may have been through exchange between women of different households. In 1796, when Mrs. Corbit made her request, her household to household networks stretched from Passyunk, Pennsylvania, into Kent County, Delaware.

The Corbit women also could have acquired apples through direct household to household exchange of the fruit itself. In an undated letter to her mother, Mrs. Corbit, Sarah Corbit Spruance offers to "send her a couple of pumpkins and a bottle of catsup" in exchange for a visit to the Spruance house in Middletown, about six miles away. Although Mrs. Spruance does not mention apples specifically, her off-hand reference to produce and food exchange between households implies that foodsharing between women as a common occurrence.⁷⁹ Thus, while the Corbits' precise methods for procuring apples is not documented, the women's frequent references to inter-household food exchange verify that their food acquisition networks were as extensive as those of males, only in different circles.

A final group of ingredients documents how food acquisition at local businesses was directly and indirectly determined by men and women. Unlike beef and flour, the Corbits purchased wine, brandy, raisins, nutmeg, salt and sugar at Outten Davis's store, or another establishment in town. They were not alone in purchasing such goods locally: since none of these items could not be grown in the Mid-Atlantic region, wealthy and poor families alike typically bought them at local dry goods stores.⁸⁰ The Corbits' purchasing habits indicate that while family women bore primary responsibility for using these

ingredients once they were inside the home, they never purchased them at the Davis store. Such an arrangement indicates that while William retained his role as the household's financier in the local food market, the Corbit women actually directed his purchases and thus significantly influenced the household's food-related economy.

Davis's journals indicate that the Corbits took advantage of the Davis store's proximity to their home: family members frequently visited the store more than once in a single day to buy small quantities of the above mentioned ingredients and other dry goods. Between 1802 and 1810 Mrs. Corbit, Alice, and a Corbit daughter each made purchases at the store on William's account. Such evidence verifies that the Corbit household's highest ranking women did conduct some face-to-face business transactions on their own. Interestingly, however they bought only fabrics and sewing supplies, such as buttons and thimbles, and food ingredients were purchased at the Davis store only by men or low ranking household servants.⁸¹

As the monitor of household economy, Mrs. Corbit was probably submitting ingredient requests based on the family's needs. According to Davis's accounts, between November 20, 1802, and November 1, 1808, William visited the Davis store 260 times. During those six years he bought 229 pounds of sugar, 1 ½ pounds of raisins, 8 ½ gallons of wine, 2 ¾ gallons of brandy, three bushels of salt, and one nutmeg in 63 visits. Although the Corbits could have been acquiring these ingredients in other places as well, Davis's records indicate that William purchased them on a fairly regular basis. Such heavy use indicates both that the household's size was indeed great, and that Mrs. Corbit's input into daily finances was consistent and considerable.

Based on off-property food acquisition alone, it is possible to reconstruct major social and spatial systems within the household. Labor divisions between male family members and male servants indicate that the household's men worked in separate, but complimentary spheres. William, Pennell, and the other sons conducted much exchange off the property, contacted businessmen, patrons and farmers of varying economic levels throughout the Delaware Valley. But, while the male servants frequently worked off-property as well, and often encountered the same people, the nature of their actions and interactions was significantly different from the family's men, and thus emphasized their roles as servants. Likewise, while the Corbit men also assumed financial responsibility in their relationships with Corbit women, the women contributed significantly to household foodways as managers and traders. As the next chapter demonstrates, these roles become clearer once the mincemeat pie's ingredients enter the Corbit property.

PROCESSING FOOD ON THE PROPERTY AND IN THE HOUSE

While the Corbit men did not entirely cease participating in food-related activities when ingredients entered the house, a majority of the work did shift to the household's women. Just as each ingredient procured outside the house shed light on a different aspect of the Corbit household's roles and relationships, each ingredient processed on the property reveals new information. Since beef was primarily processed both in indoor and outdoor service areas, such as storage spaces and the smokehouse, it provides a key to understanding how these spaces were used and by whom. Citrus processing, on the other hand, largely remained in the kitchen, and thus yields insight into how interior space was used. By extension, spices and sugar demonstrate how social and spatial access was determined and controlled within the house.

Since these aspects of Corbit household foodways are so closely linked with their physical environment, one must understand the landscape of their house and immediate property. Unfortunately, many key structures relating to food production, such as the henhouse, well, stable, ice house and an additional smokehouse, have been razed and only loosely documented. (Figure 8) Even within the house, it is sometimes difficult to tell which features are original and which are products of the 1939 Sharp restoration. Nonetheless, with the help of William's will and inventory, letters, photographs, drawings

and Sharp's restoration report, it is possible to reconstruct a fair portion of the property. Although it is a bit late, the 1818 will, in particular, provides an excellent framework for such a reconstruction. By noting how William's will describes their property and buildings in relation to each other, one can, with minimum speculation, determine the main social and spatial systems of food production on the Corbit property.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the mansion stood in the northwest corner of "Forty six perches of land" along the Appoquinimink River, as depicted in a survey and sketch done by Philip Reading for William Corbit on June 9, 1777. (Figure 9)⁸² A more detailed survey and labeled sketch of the property, done on April 9 1839, by D. W. Thomas for William's son Daniel, also shows a "brick stable" and a "barn" behind the house, and property extending southward along the river. (Figure 10) In addition, a small road, labeled as both "Landing Road" and "Road to Corbit Tanyard," runs in front of the house and outbuildings, and down to William's tannery, approximately six acres from the house.⁸³

William describes the main unit of buildings, including the house and "brick stable" in items one and two of his will. Between the two descriptions one may reconstruct a fairly detailed picture of the property immediately surrounding the Corbit mansion, which is where most of the food-related activity would have occurred. "Itum 1" specifies "the Dweling House I now reside in, the Ground attached thereto, Carriage House and Half the Brick Stable, With the lot of Ground between and Tan-Yard." In his description of the same property in "Itum 2," William adds a few more details: "my manson Dwelling Hous and Garding, as far Westwardly as the Brick Stable also a Lot of

Ground containing Six acres leaden to Tan-yard.” Based on these clues and the aforementioned surveys, one may construct a picture of the house in the northwest corner of the property, bordered by Main Street on the north, and facing southeast toward the Appoquinimink river. Landing Road runs in front of the house, roughly parallel to the river, and continues on to the southeast. To the south and west of the house is a brick stable for cows and horses, which, with the southwest wall of the house, frames a plot of land that probably contained a garden.⁸⁴ Although the will does not specify the carriage house’s location, a later photograph suggests that it stood slightly southeast of the main house with its doors facing south towards Main Street. As such, the carriage house would have formed a southern border to the Corbits’ main property, enclosing yard, outbuildings, livestock, and gardens.⁸⁵ (Figure 11)

In addition to those structures specified in the will, “the Ground attached” to the Corbit house held a number of smaller outbuildings that William did not bother to name.⁸⁶ An original brick smokehouse still stands a few feet from the house’s 1790 kitchen addition. (Figure 12) Its proximity to a henhouse and other outbuildings is suggested in a letter written by Mrs. Corbit’s step-great grandson, in which he recalls an incident at the Corbit house when Mrs. Corbit was still the reigning matriarch:

A cruel mother hen had weaned her chickens and they were huddled in the kitchen shed corner by the smokehouse door. ‘Grandmother Corbit’ and others were ‘in the house’ and I was running about the kitchen and shed. Darkness had fallen to some extent and the chickens were hugging each other, when I took a hand. When one of the maids came out most or all of the chickens lay dead. . .⁸⁷

This sad but informative little tale fills in some gaps in the will by placing the smokehouse near the kitchen, where it now stands, and connecting the two with a shed.⁸⁸ The presence

of the unfortunate chickens also suggests that the henhouse was nearby. Although other small buildings, such as a school room, ice house, and other small sheds, are documented to have stood in the “Ground attached” to the house, only the aforementioned structures can be located with certainty.

Amid this grouping of outbuildings stood William’s mansion—the center of Corbit life and foodways. The original house, built in 1772, was a center passage, double pile plan, with five bays and two stories. (Figure 13) A wide entry hall with a prominent central staircase divided the first floor in half. The formal dining room and a parlor flanked either side of the hall at the front of the house, while a master bedroom and workroom or pantry occupied the back two rooms.⁸⁹ Three bedchambers—two for family members and one for servants—occupied most of the second floor. (Figure 14) A fourth room, which the Corbits called the “long room,” was an exceptionally large formal parlor at the front of the house, approximately width of the downstairs parlor plus the hall. (Figure 15) The garret was divided into a few small, unheated chambers, and the basement contained the kitchen and extensive storage space. (Figure 16)

The house’s service spaces deserve to be examined in greater detail, since they contained much of the household’s food-related activity.⁹⁰ Before a second kitchen was added in 1790, food circulated mainly between the outbuildings, basement kitchen, pantry and dining room. Based on the house’s stairs, halls, and doorways, a probable pattern of movement can be determined. After initial harvesting and processing outside, food was prepared in the basement kitchen, which was located central to both the exterior service spaces and interior formal spaces. (Figure 17) The kitchen was elevated slightly above

the rest of the basement, almost between the first and second stories, and had two doors: one that led outside to the area of the smokehouse and other outbuildings, and another opened onto a stairway. On that stairway, one could go down to access several lockable rooms of basement storage, or up to a first floor landing that opened onto the main entry hall on the right, and the pantry on the left. (Figures 18 & 19) The main hall allowed direct access to every formal space in the house—the master bedroom, parlor, dining room, main staircase, and long room—so it is likely that any food consumed in those rooms was brought up from the basement to the main hall, and then directly to the room. The pantry allowed direct access only into the dining room. Such an arrangement suggests that the pantry space was used to keep food warm after it was brought upstairs from the basement and before it was served in the dining room.

These patterns were altered in 1790, when a ground-level kitchen wing with an upstairs chamber was added to the south side of the original house, adjacent to the dining room and workroom. (Figure 20) Although there is no evidence to suggest whether the Corbits continued to use their basement kitchen after 1790, it is likely that they needed both kitchens to feed the household's several adults, servants, guests and seven or more children. The second kitchen was designed with two exterior doors that connected it to the front yard and the rear service area. (Figure 21) An interior door opened on a narrow spiral staircase that connected the new kitchen with the basement, two rooms away from the basement kitchen. Another doorway led both to the pantry and to another spiral staircase, by which Alice's second floor chamber could be directly accessed. (Figure 22) Finally, a fifth door opened directly into the dining room.

The kitchen addition created intricate patterns of movement within the household: it connected second floor servants' chambers to both kitchens, the pantry, and the outbuildings. As such, food-related activities were strictly relegated to house's south side, and adjoining property. Alice and other live-in help could leave their chambers, descend the spiral stairs to the new kitchen, and from there access the outbuildings and yard, the basement, and all basement spaces, without ever entering a formal space. This arrangement also allowed food to be carried either from the basement kitchen into the pantry, as before, or directly from the new kitchen into the dining room, thereby lessening the need for a warming space.

The intricacy of these patterns is verified by how the household processed and stored ingredients on the property and inside the house. As beef and citrus illustrate, once ingredients made it to the property, they required processing in different spaces and by different people before they were ready to become part of the pie filling. While beef shows how the Corbits used outside and inside service spaces for processing, citrus documents how some more specialized work was centered in the kitchen.

Once the Corbit men acquired beef from outside sources and brought it to the property, Mrs. Corbit and her servants began processing almost immediately. Even though butchering was usually done in the fall when temperatures grew cool, beef required freezing or labor intensive curing immediately if it were to last more than a few days.⁹¹ Preserving beef was a two-fold process: first it was cured in a salty brine for several weeks, then it was smoked and stored. Mrs. Lea includes a basic recipe for curing beef in *Domestic Cookery*:

Make a pickle of six quarts of salt, six gallons of water, half a pound of saltpetre, and three of sugar, or half a gallon of molasses; pack the beef in a barrel, with fine and coarse salt mixed; when the pickle is cold, pour it over, and put a weight on top; let it stay two weeks, when you can hang it up and smoke it, to boil through the summer; or boil the pickle over again, and leave it in till you want to use it: this is for two hundred pounds.⁹²

Given the weight of beef and the mass quantities in which it was usually preserved, it is likely that male servants like Abraham, Joseph, or George, assisted with lifting and carrying it when necessary. Nonetheless, Mrs. Corbit and her female servants certainly did much of the indoor and outdoor work themselves.⁹³

Presuming it was already butchered, once the beef was brought onto the property, Mrs. Corbit and her servants would have set up curing barrels or other containers in an area away from the main house, such as in the basement rooms. Mrs. Corbit would then have immersed the raw beef in the brine, and checking it periodically over the next few weeks. When it was ready to be smoked, she would have taken the beef out of the basement or other storage area and to the service yard behind the 1790 kitchen wing, where their brick smokehouse stood.⁹⁴ With her servants help Mrs. Corbit would have hung it and smoked it for up to three weeks, by which time it was ready to keep all winter. Original meat hooks in the ceiling of the basement kitchen and storage rooms indicate that the Corbits hung their preserved meat in these spaces until it was ready to be used.

(Figure 23)

Due to the efficient design of the Corbits' service spaces, the beef did not have to enter the main house at any time during the preservation process. Indeed, it did not even enter the kitchen until it was fully preserved and about to be used. In January, when Mrs. Corbit was ready to make the pie, she or a servant would have cut five pounds from the

beef store in the basement and brought it into one of the kitchens. There they would have boiled it to lessen the strong taste of brine and smoke, before chopping it and adding it to the mincemeat mixture.⁹⁵ By separating work and pleasure by segregating the spaces in which such activities took place, the Corbits exhibited a growing trend among wealthy and middle class American households of the time.

Unlike the mass quantities of beef, which require extensive processing outside and inside the house, lemons were small and could be processed by any of the household's women right in the kitchen. Mrs. Lea's mincemeat recipe calls for three kinds of citrus in various stages of preservation: the juice and grated peel of two fresh lemons, a spoonful of dried orange peel, and sliced citron. Because of lemons' tough, waxy rinds, the Corbits could have kept them fresh in a cool place for up to a few weeks. When the filling was ready to be made, either Mrs. Corbit, a daughter, or their female servants retrieved the two lemons from storage, possibly in the basement, and took them into one of the kitchens. Once in the kitchen, she had all the necessary tools for lemon preparation on hand.⁹⁶ She squeezed the juice into a bowl of the partially prepared mixture, either by hand or with a wooden or cast iron two-part lemon press. Since the Corbits were fairly wealthy, they were likely to have the labor-saving press, which was fitted together with a hinge at one end and a handle at the other, and two interlocking porcelain domes to receive and press a half-lemon without being damaged by its acid.⁹⁷ Finally, she grated the empty peel into the mixture using a metal grater, as for nutmeg, until only a thin rind remained.

Unlike fresh lemons, the second kind of citrus had to be preserved in advance. Dried citrus peels, sometimes called sweetmeats, were a common form of preserved fruit

that was used in cooking and baking, or simply eaten alone. Unless they were purchased, the mincemeat's dried orange peels were prepared by Mrs. Corbit or her female house servants in one of the kitchens.⁹⁸ Like fresh lemons, oranges would initially have been stored in a cool place until Mrs. Corbit or her servants had time to preserve them. Since dried oranges required heat, preservation would have been done in a kitchen or other space with a stove or fireplace.⁹⁹ According to on basic recipe for "China Chips," made with either China or Seville oranges, Mrs. Corbit would first have used a knife to cut orange rinds into a long, thin chips with all the white removed. She then placed them in a pot with boiling water, either on the stove or over a hearth fire, until they were tender. At this point, she drained the peels and immersed them into a thick, cold sugar syrup, where they remained for a day or two before she returned them to the stove to be scalded, then dried.¹⁰⁰

A similar technique would have been used to preserve the "ounce of citron" that was to be sliced. The citron, which is commonly believed to be an ancestor of the lemon, resembles its modern relative, though it is larger (four to eight inches long) and more knobbly, with a thicker skin. A popular fruit in early America, it was, and still is, primarily consumed as a candied peel, alone or as an ingredient in prepared foods. Like the orange peel, the citron would have been preserved by soaking and boiling in water and sugar syrup well in advance. Unlike the orange, however, the citron would have been stored wet, rather than dry, and stored in pots filled with lemon juice.¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Lea includes a similar recipe for preserving "Green Lemons" in *Domestic Cookery*:

Take the young lemons, cut them in half, scrape them, and take out the pulp; cut them in such shapes as you please; put them in a preserving kettle and cover them with

water; put in a little alum to green them, and let them boil till they are transparent, then take them out and drain them on a cloth; give the kettle another cleansing, and put them in with their weight in sugar; let them stew gently, but be careful that they do not boil; let them cook till the syrup is rich.¹⁰²

When it was time to make the mincemeat filling, one of the Corbit women would have removed one ounce of the citron rind from its preservative solution, sliced it, and added it to the mix.

While the orange or citrus peels would likely have been stored in the basement or pantry until needed, the entire preservation process took place in the kitchen. As she preserved the peels, Mrs. Corbit, Alice or other servants would have moved primarily between the stove or hearth and flat working spaces, and perhaps between the two kitchens themselves. Like beef preservation, women conducted citrus preservation entirely within the house's service spaces, away from the formal rooms. But unlike the indoor and outdoor movement required by beef, citrus confined the women to a small, hot space, even considering the Corbits' large house and two kitchens. In contrast to the comparatively vast space that separated the labors of William Corbit and his servants, the close quarters of the house's interior service spaces meant that Corbit women of all ranks consistently worked in close physical and social proximity to one another.

Since flour, sugar, nutmeg, wine, brandy, raisins, and salt received most of their processing outside of the house, they were simply stored and used by household members as needed. The way these items were stored, however, reveals elements of the household's hierarchy and use of space. Since flour was milled in bulk and not extremely expensive, it probably would have been stored in general or public storage areas. More

expensive items, like sugar and spice, however, were often stored under lock and key in a spice chest or in the mistress of the house's chamber closet. (Figure 24)¹⁰³ Although William's inventory generally does not list food items, based on other valuable goods listed as being in Mrs. Corbit's closet, she certainly may have stored small quantities of expensive foods alongside her "1 Sett large knives & fks. . . 2 small ditto" and the other "contents of Cupboard."¹⁰⁴

Once stowed in her chamber, those foods were kept from servants by both physical and social barriers. Most obviously, a locked door prevented physical access. But the chamber itself also created a spatial and social barrier. Since the chamber was designated as Mr. and Mrs. Corbit's domain, household members of a lower social station were denied access without permission. While trusted servants like Alice may have been given a key to the mistress's chamber closet, the space and the objects in it were still under the mistress's control. Thus, just as William and the other Corbit men controlled access to outside business and market, Mrs. Corbit controlled the access of her servants to household spaces.

THE DINERS PARTAKE

At the clock chimes two, the long room door opens upstairs and footsteps sound on the main staircase.¹⁰⁵ As William, Pennell, and their business acquaintance descend to the first floor, their voices echo in the hall, where Mrs. Corbit and Alice can hear them. In the front parlor, Mrs. Corbit and her daughter-in-law Molly finish their conversation and cross the hall into the dining room, where the men are waiting to begin the meal. Alice, who has been minding Thomas and teaching young Sarah to sew in a corner of the pantry, puts her supplies away and takes the children into the adjoining kitchen. At the kitchen table she helps Sarah and Thomas eat their food, and joins the servants in consuming extra portions from the main meal. Back in the dining room, Mary seats herself at the head of the table, William sits at the foot, and Pennell, Molly, and their visitor take the chairs in between. Once everyone is seated, the diners may partake in the fruits of their many labors.

As the mincemeat pie sits amid hungry Corbit household members on this cold January day, it symbolically connects each person with the others, and with his or her surrounding environment. Unpacking this symbol, ingredient by ingredient, reveals that the Corbits were part of an intricate social and spatial web that stretched from the smallest spaces of their own house to the international ports of Philadelphia. While this study does

not document every action and interaction that went into making the pie, it does provide a method for using food's inherent characteristics to access the Corbits' unique web of relationships. In addition to shedding light on the Corbit household, however, such a method of food-study is crucial to understanding how the subtleties of day-to-day activities shaped the larger early American experience. As a basic element of human life, food provides a powerful window into the essence of human life in the past.

NOTES

¹ James Corbit to Daniel Corbit, 28 June 1827, James Corbit file, Corbit-Higgins-Spruance Papers, Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, Del. (hereafter cited as C-H-S Papers)

² While Mrs. Lea lists them as ingredients, lard, butter, mace, currants, and suet have been omitted from this project due to lack of evidence of their use in the Corbit household.

³ Bernard Herman, *The Stolen House* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1992).

Ian Hodder, *Reading the Past: Current approaches to interpretation in archaeology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁴ Herman, 11.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Hodder, 123.

⁷ Ibid., 124.

⁸ Ibid., 125.

⁹ Furniture references based on the estate inventory of William Corbit. New Castle County Probate Records, 1820, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware. See Appendix C.

¹⁰ Clarissa F. Dillon, *So Serve it Up: Eighteenth-Century English Foodways in Eastern Pennsylvania* (Mansfield, OH: BookMasters, Inc., 1999), iv.

Comparable local dishes have been substituted where they can be documented.

¹¹ "The Restoration of the Corbit-Sharp House," Corbit files, Historic Houses of Odessa, 18.

¹² Sheila Grannen, Gregory Malak, and Gary Smith, "Search for 'Lost Corbit House,'" Corbit files, Historic Houses of Odessa, 3.

¹³ Outten Davis Store Records, 1802-1810, Joseph Downs Manuscript Collection, The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Del.

William Corbit purchased a set or more of dishes and several tumblers from the Davis Store between November 25, 1802, and May 26, 1803. Although their material and style are not identified, the dish forms, quantity purchased, and price paid for each are as follows:

November 25, 1802	2 ½	tumblers	@ 8d
	2	small platters	@ 6d
	2	do	@ 4d
December 27, 1802	1	bowel [bowl]	@ 5 ½
May 18, 1803	1	lg ovel dish	@ 6/
	1	sm “	@ 4/3
	1	sallad “	@ 1/8
	1	deep “	@ 2/4
	1 set	plates	@ 3/9
	1	sup spoon	@ 6/6
	3	glass tumblers	@ 8d
May 26, 1803	2	saus boats	@ 1/3

This information documents only one instance of a Corbit tableware purchase, and it is likely they were making additional purchases elsewhere.

¹⁴ Dillon, 137.

¹⁵ Louise Conway Beldon, *The Festive Tradition: Table Decoration and Desserts in America, 1650-1900* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1983), 21-24.

¹⁶ I have substituted pumpkin soup for the more Germanic stewed cabbages mentioned in Clarissa Dillon's menu (see footnote 10). Dillon includes pumpkin soup as a winter dish of upper class Philadelphian Quakers in her December menu for the Fisher family. Given that William's third wife was a Fisher of that family, pumpkin soup would have been a likely part of the Corbits meals as well. In addition, Mrs. Corbit's daughter Sarah offers her pumpkins in exchange for a visit in a December 1, (no year) letter, thereby confirming that Corbits included pumpkins in their winter diet.

Anthony Higgins to H. Rodney Sharp, 4 January 1965, Corbit files, Historic Houses of Odessa, Odessa, Del. Higgins cites a recipe hand-written by his grandfather for "Corbit or Odessa Sausage":

To 40 lbs meat cut fine (meat to be half fat)—
10 oz salt
6 ½ oz black pepper
4 oz pulverized sage (if very strong 3 oz)
Even table spoonful of red pepper

Higgins goes on to recount the appearance of the Corbit cellar when it was owned by William Corbit's son, Daniel: "I remember seeing part of the cellar at Uncle Dan's festooned with coils of stuffed sausage. At Fairview (where I grew up, near Delaware City) we had it that way and also in stone crocks with lard around it if memory serves."

Elizabeth Ellicott Lea, *Domestic Cookery, Useful Receipts, and Hints to Young Housekeepers* (1853: reprint, with an introduction by William Woys Weaver, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1982).

Lea, a Quaker cousin of the Corbit family, recommends a similar sausage receipt.

Lea, 17. Lea includes a receipt "To Fry Beef."

Louise B. Heite, "A Report on the Archaeological Excavations at the Wilson-Polk Store Site in Odessa, Delaware," Wilson files, Historic Houses of Odessa.

Archaeology done on the Wilson store site, adjacent to Corbit property, uncovered several "food bones," including one that is "perhaps a sirloin steak."

¹⁷ Dillon, 124. A recipe for preserving and preparing green peas.

¹⁸ Lea, 56. A recipe for preparing "Beets."

¹⁹ Lea, 100. A recipe for "Rice Flummery."

²⁰ Forman, Martha Ogle, *Plantation Life at Rose Hill: The Diaries of Martha Ogle Forman, 1814-1815*, ed. W. Emerson Wilson (Wilmington, DE: The Historical Society of Delaware, 1976).

²¹ Accordingly, the early twentieth-century Corbit family cookbook includes no receipt for mincemeat pie among its contributions from contemporary Corbit women, friends of the family, and old family receipts and newspaper clippings.

²² Lea, 85.

²³ Lea, 84.

²⁴ Dillon, 132.

²⁵ Lea, xxvii.

²⁶ Lea, xvii-xix.

²⁷ James L. Mannering, "Sloops and Shallops Upon the Appoquinimink: The Corbit Vessels; Lively, Union, and Ann, 1795 to 1807," *Documenting, Preserving and Interpreting an Historic Village: Odessa, Delaware, 1750-1800* (Winterim Project Summary, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Library), 165.

²⁸ Gabrielle M. Lanier and Bernard L. Herman, *Everyday Architecture of the Mid-Atlantic: Looking at Buildings and Landscapes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 31.

²⁹ John A. H. Sweeney, *Grandeur on the Appoquinimink* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1959), 23.

³⁰ James Corbit to Daniel Corbit, 28 June 1827, James Corbit file, C-H-S Papers. James Corbit addresses a June 28, 1827, letter to his family at "William's Castle." The nickname for the mansion appears to have been popular among family members. See C-H-S papers, James Corbit folder.

³¹ Memoir, n. d., William Fisher Corbit file, C-H-S Papers.

³² Sweeney, 25.

³³ Mary Cowgill Corbit to Mary Cowgill, 10 February 1796, Mary Cowgill Corbit file, C-H-S Papers; Mary Cowgill to Mary Cowgill Corbit, 23 March 1796, Mary Cowgill Corbit file, C-H-S Papers.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Joan M. Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 121.

³⁶ Ibid., 38.

³⁷ Sweeney, 75.

³⁸ In "Itum 2" of his 1818 will, William bequeaths a second house to Pennell: "the House and Garden [Pennell] now occupies and Garden;" Granen, 3. Although the exact location of Pennell's house has not been confirmed a dwelling appears to have existed behind and to the west of the mansion in the early nineteenth century. No formal archaeology has been done on the supposed site, but possible foundations between two and six inches below the surface were located with metal probes. In addition, bricks, creamware, glass, and ceramic shards and metal were found in the immediate area.

³⁹ Although letters indicate that Joseph Corbit worked for William, the Davis store records show that Juda Corbit purchased items on Pennell Corbit's account. On March 28, 1807, for instance, she purchased "1 pair woman slipper" under his name. It is therefore possible that the Joseph, George, Aron and Juda worked for either or both households simultaneously.

⁴⁰ William Corbit to Pennell Corbit, 6 January 1800, William Corbit file, C-H-S papers; William states that he has sent William Fisher to "Weston School," a Quaker Boarding School in Chester County, Pennsylvania. See Jensen, 174-183 for details on the Westtown Boarding School.

⁴¹ William Fisher Corbit to William Corbit, 3 March 1809, Philadelphia, William Fisher Corbit file, C-H-S Papers; William Fisher Corbit to Rhoda Davis, 10 October 1812, Philadelphia; William Fisher Corbit to Rhoda Davis, 2 December 1812. In letters to his father and his fiancée, Rhoda Davis, William Fisher reports on his experiences as a merchant, including his travels and the price of country produce.

⁴² William Corbit to Pennell Corbit, 28 August 1799, William Corbit file, C-H-S Papers. William writes "I took John up to school last second day near where William is." Since William Fisher was enrolled at "Weston School" at this time (see footnote 40), this reference suggests that John was also near Philadelphia.

⁴³ John Cowgill Corbit to William Corbit, 18 May 1807, C-H-S Papers, William Corbit file.

John Cowgill reports visiting "cosen Caleb Brintin," and appears to be enjoying his apprenticeship, claiming "I love my home very well."

⁴⁴ Sweeney, 76. Daniel attended the Friends School in Smyrna; Mary Corbit to Corbit family, 15 June no year, C-H-S Papers, Mary Cowgill Corbit file. Mary writes about her boarding school in a letter postmarked "WILM DE JUN 15."

⁴⁵ Jensen, 45.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁷ Sweeney, 25.

⁴⁸ Memoir, n. d., C-H-S Papers, William Fisher Corbit file. Another nurse named Rachel Burns was already employed in the Corbit household when Alice began. Burns, however, left the family when William married Mary Cowgill, and Alice stayed on to raise the rest of the children.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ John Cowgill Corbit to Corbit family, 18 May 1807, John Cowgill Corbit file, C-H-S Papers; Mary Corbit to Corbit family, n. d., Mary Cowgill Corbit file, C-H-S Papers.

⁵¹ Mary Liston to Mary Cowgill Corbit, 8 April 1806, Mary Cowgill Corbit file, C-H-S Papers.

⁵² Sweeney, 25.

⁵³ Outten Davis records, October 5 and December 11, 1804, and May 11, 1805.

⁵⁴ Outten Davis Store records. For their girl's purchases, see May 11, 1805, May 28 1806, and October 21, 1806. For their woman's purchases, see December 18, 1802, January 3, 1803, and April 17, 1805. For Alice Murray's purchases, see October 5, 1804, December 11, 1804, and May 11, 1805.

⁵⁵ Corbit ledger, Historic Houses of Odessa.

Davis records several payments of servitude by men, women, and "Negrows." In January 1803, for instance, William Waggoner paid "By 2 2/3 months servitude" for cash lent to him by the Corbits, p. 47. In August 1805, Elizabeth Jolet also repaid a cash loan "By Servitude 2 m," p. 55. Likewise, in exchange for cash and "sundries," "Wilsons Bill, Negrow" paid "By 2 1/2 m & 13 days on Board the Ann," "13 1/2 Cords Cuting Hickory Wood," and "2 days Work."

⁵⁶ William Corbit to Pennell Corbit, 12 June 1800, William Corbit file, C-H-S Papers.

⁵⁷ Horace L. Hotchkiss, Jr., "The Corbit-Sharp House Family Circle," *Winterthur Portfolio* 1 (1964): 1, 161. Hotchkiss suggests that Darrey, or "Dorsey" as he interprets the name, "worked around the place and took care of the horse and two cows." Jensen, 93. Jensen asserts that early nineteenth-century males "built the barns, produced the hay, . . . fed the cows, and cleaned the stables."

⁵⁸ William Corbit folder, C-H-S Papers.

⁵⁹ December 11, 1804; January 23 and February 15, 1805, Outten Davis Records.

⁶⁰ Sweeney, 22.

⁶¹ Unlike many blacks who patronized Davis's store during the same time period, however, these Corbits had accounts their own names. While they primarily used these independent accounts, they also made occasional purchases under the accounts of white Corbits, such as when Juda bought women's slippers on Pennell's account. Such patterns indicate an interesting duality in the Corbit-Corbit relationship: while Joseph, George, Aron, and Juda appear to be servants of William's family, they also have some degree of independence within the community.

⁶² Contemporary Davis records show that men of Cantwell's Bridge commonly bought both alcohol and fabrics openly at the store, but married females and servants, if they made purchases at all, primarily bought fabrics or other sewing and costume supplies.

⁶³ Hotchkiss, 161.

⁶⁴ C-H-S Papers, William Corbit file. William mentions that Joseph is hauling goods "with the cart" in letters dated August 28, 1799; October 4, November 7 and , December 29, 1800; and March 9, 1801. See C-H-S papers, William Corbit folder.

⁶⁵ Lea, xx.

⁶⁶ William Corbit to Pennell Corbit, 7 November 1800, William Corbit file, C-H-S Papers. William Corbit to Pennell Corbit, 22 June 1801, William Corbit file, C-H-S Papers.

⁶⁷ Information in the following three paragraphs is taken from Sweeney 5-9.

⁶⁸ Sally Schwartz, "Cantwell's Bridge, Delaware: A Demographic and Community Study" *Delaware History* XIX (1980): 1, 20-38.

⁶⁹ William Corbit to Pennell Corbit, 29 December 1800, William Corbit file, C-H-S Papers. William Corbit to Pennell Corbit, 22 June 1801, William Corbit file, C-H-S Papers. William also reminds Pennell to "change the cattle to fresh pasture" in a letter dated June 22, 1801.

⁷⁰ Jensen, 37.

⁷¹ While William does not appear to have purchased beef at the Davis store, records of his pork purchases suggest another means by which the family procured meats. On December 19, 1806, William purchased 863 pounds of pork at the store, and Pennell purchased 807 pounds.

⁷² William Corbit to Pennell Corbit, 24 October 1800, William Corbit file, C-H-S Papers.

William wrote to Pennell with a report on field and crop damage following a particularly bad storm in Passyunk. He also predicts what sort of damage was done to his land in Delaware and asks Pennell to monitor the situation.

⁷³ William Corbit to Pennell Corbit, 27 September 1796, C-H-S Papers, William Corbit file.

In a September 27, 1796 letter to Pennell, William advises him to “solissit” help from the community. See C-H-S papers, William Corbit folder.

⁷⁴ William’s inventory lists “1 Stack of wheat Supposed 20 bushels” stored somewhere on the property. See Appendix C.

⁷⁵ Margaret Visser, *Much Depends on Dinner* (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 265.

Martha Ogle Forman frequently received barrels of oranges and lemons from her step-daughter Mrs. Bryan in Georgia.

⁷⁶ Lea, 147, 136, 108, 106-7, and 230.

⁷⁷ Although the Corbits never purchased lemons at Davis’s store, he did sell them periodically in small quantities.

⁷⁸ Thomas Corbit to Pennell Corbit, 5 December 1820, C-H-S papers, Thomas Corbit folder.

The “Sally” he mentions is his 25 year old sister, Sarah, who, in 1820, still lived at home in Cantwell’s Bridge. It is important to note that, while this excerpt suggests a pattern of food acquisition that was probably used by the Corbits throughout their time in Cantwell’s Bridge, the make-up of the Corbit household was drastically different in 1820 than it was between 1802 and 1810. The children who were away at boarding school near the turn of the century were adults by 1820, and most had moved to separate residences. Likewise, William, Alice, Pennell and Molly had passed away, and Pennell’s children had moved into the mansion with Mrs. Corbit.

⁷⁹ Martha Ogle Forman recorded frequent produce exchanges between women in her diary. On August 31, 1818, for instance, she “sent” a melon to Mrs. Nind, and on September 26, 1819, she “sent fine fruit” to her sister’s house.

⁸⁰ Jensen, 63. Other items included in this group are molasses, pepper, tea, coffee, chocolate, and salt.

⁸¹ Davis records that a “girl” bought kitchen supplies twice on William’s account. On May 11, 1805, she bought six pounds of sugar and four gallons of sherry wine, and on May 28, 1806, she again bought six pounds of sugar. No other Corbit household women are recorded as buying food at Davis’s store.

⁸² Sweeney 38, manuscript reproduction.

⁸³ Will of William Corbit, March 17, 1817, New Castle Country Probate Records, 1820, D. S. A. See Appendix B.

⁸⁴ William’s inventory lists three cows, one horse, and two pigs on the property. See Appendix C.

⁸⁵ The files at Historic Houses of Odessa contain a 1938 photograph taken from Main Street that shows a frame carriage house before it was leveled in 1939. According to this photograph and a contemporary pencil sketch of the structure, it appears to have stood slightly southeast of the main house, with its doors facing north toward Main Street. At that time a short drive ran immediately in front of the Mansion, from Main Street to the carriage house, forming the southern border of the yard, (Figure 11); Hotchkiss, 161. Another possible location for the original carriage house exists, however. Hotchkiss suggests that the barn depicted on the 1839 survey was actually the original carriage house, which had since been enlarged by William’s son Daniel.

⁸⁶ “Item 6th” of William’s will bequeaths to his son Thomas upon Mrs. Corbit’s death: “the Ground from the Road leading to the Tan-Yard including the frame buildings from the West of the Brick Stable to the line of David Wilson [neighbor]. . .” Again, though William does not specify how the frame buildings were used, his description supports the notion that land surrounding the mansion was crowded with small service buildings.

⁸⁷ Hotchkiss, 165.

⁸⁸ It is unclear whether the shed was present during the 1802 to 1810 time period. As documented in the restoration report, Mr. Sharp believed it was “late” and thus removed it.

⁸⁹ The purpose of the pantry space has been greatly debated and it has been alternately called the pine office, the pantry, and the workroom. Even William’s will is not specific, listing only two dollars worth of “Sundrys.” Although its exact use has not been determined, consideration of the way space was used within the house suggests that it was used, at least sometimes, for food-related activities. “Analysis of Corbit Inventory/Furnishing Scheme of Corbit-Sharp House, 3/30/95,” Corbit files, Historic Houses of Odessa; “The Restoration of the Corbit-Sharp House,” 23, Corbit files, Historic Houses of Odessa.

⁹⁰ Information about the house's appearance in the early 19th century has been extracted from its present state of restoration, along with the 1941 restoration report. Although the H. Rodney Sharp conducted a careful restoration, the report records some differences between the house's original structure and its present appearance. These differences have been noted in this paper's description.

⁹¹ Jensen, 37. After the men procured fresh meat, women were responsible for curing and smoking it.

⁹² Lea, 173.

⁹³ Martha Ogle Forman frequently recorded meat preserving activities in her journal, though she seldom specified who performed them. It is clear, however, that she participated in the labor despite the presence of many household slaves. On May 19, 1815, she writes "I hung up" two drying pieces and two boiling pieces of beef. Later, on March 2, 1819, she records that "I had [the hams] hung to smoke," indicating that her slaves did the work. Such a loose division of labor was probably present in the Corbit household as well.

⁹⁴ Lea, 168, 172.

⁹⁵ Lea, 85.

⁹⁶ Although no information exists on the Corbits' kitchen tools, the tools required for processing fresh lemons were common kitchen equipment.

⁹⁷ Visser, 276.

⁹⁸ Since there are no records of the Corbits purchasing sweetmeats, it is likely that they made their own at least some of the time.

⁹⁹ Restoration report, 17.

The basement kitchen's hearth appears to have been equipped with an oven, and a bar for holding trammels and pots.

William's 1818 inventory also documents a ten-plate stove in one of the kitchens. It is unclear, however, whether the Corbits had a stove between 1802 and 1810.

¹⁰⁰ The "China Chips" is paraphrased from *Mrs. Mary Eales's Receipts* (London: Printed for J. Brindley. . . 1738; facsimile reprint by Prospect Books Ltd, London, 1985) 60-61; 54. As quoted in Dillon, 133.

¹⁰¹ Receipt is paraphrased from "To preserve CITRONS," 147. As quoted in Dillon 133. Original receipt in Richard Bradley. *The Country Housewife and Lady's Director, . . . Part II.* (London: Printed for D. Browne. . ., 1732; facsimile reprint by Prospect Books Ltd., London, 1980.)

¹⁰² Lea, 130.

¹⁰³ Ron Hurst. "'Well Finished, Convenient, and in Good Repair:' Peyton and Betty Randolph's House Restored and Refurnished." Paper presented at the Colonial Williamsburg Antiques Forum, Williamsburg, VA, February, 2000. Chesapeake gentry women kept their most important dishes, food, and possessions near their chambers. Betty Randolph had a large closet constructed on one side of her chamber, in which she stored sugar and other valuable foods.

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix C.

¹⁰⁵ Like the earlier meal description, this scenario is hypothetical.

APPENDIX A: FIGURES

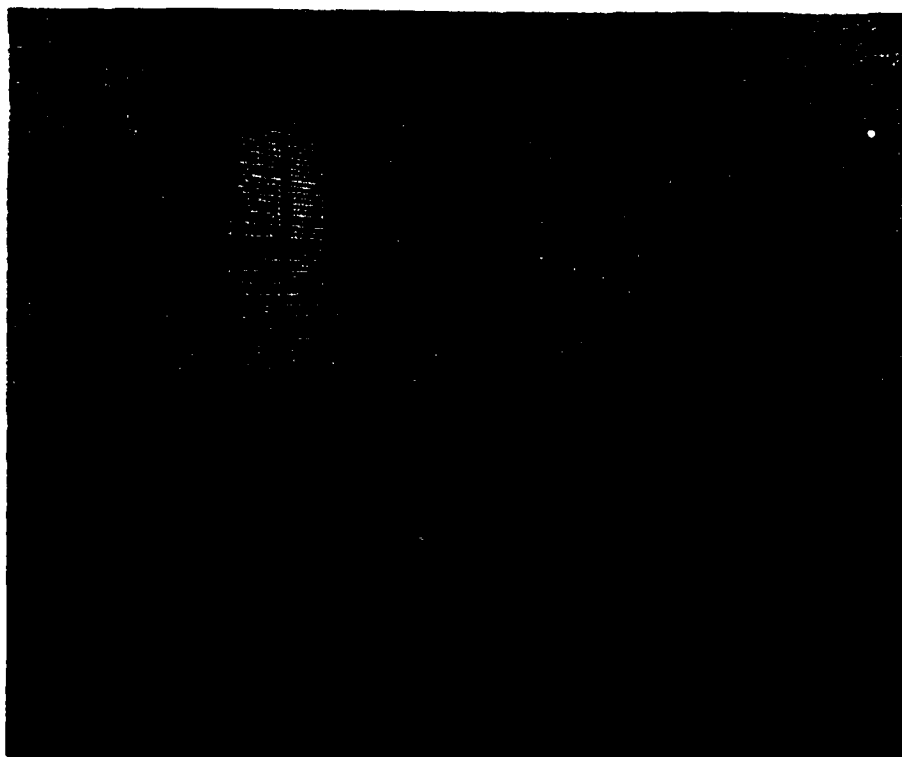


Figure 1. Dining Room, The Corbit-Sharp House, 1958. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

The door at the far right leads into the 1790 kitchen addition. Furnishings reflect Mr. Sharp's interpretation of the house.

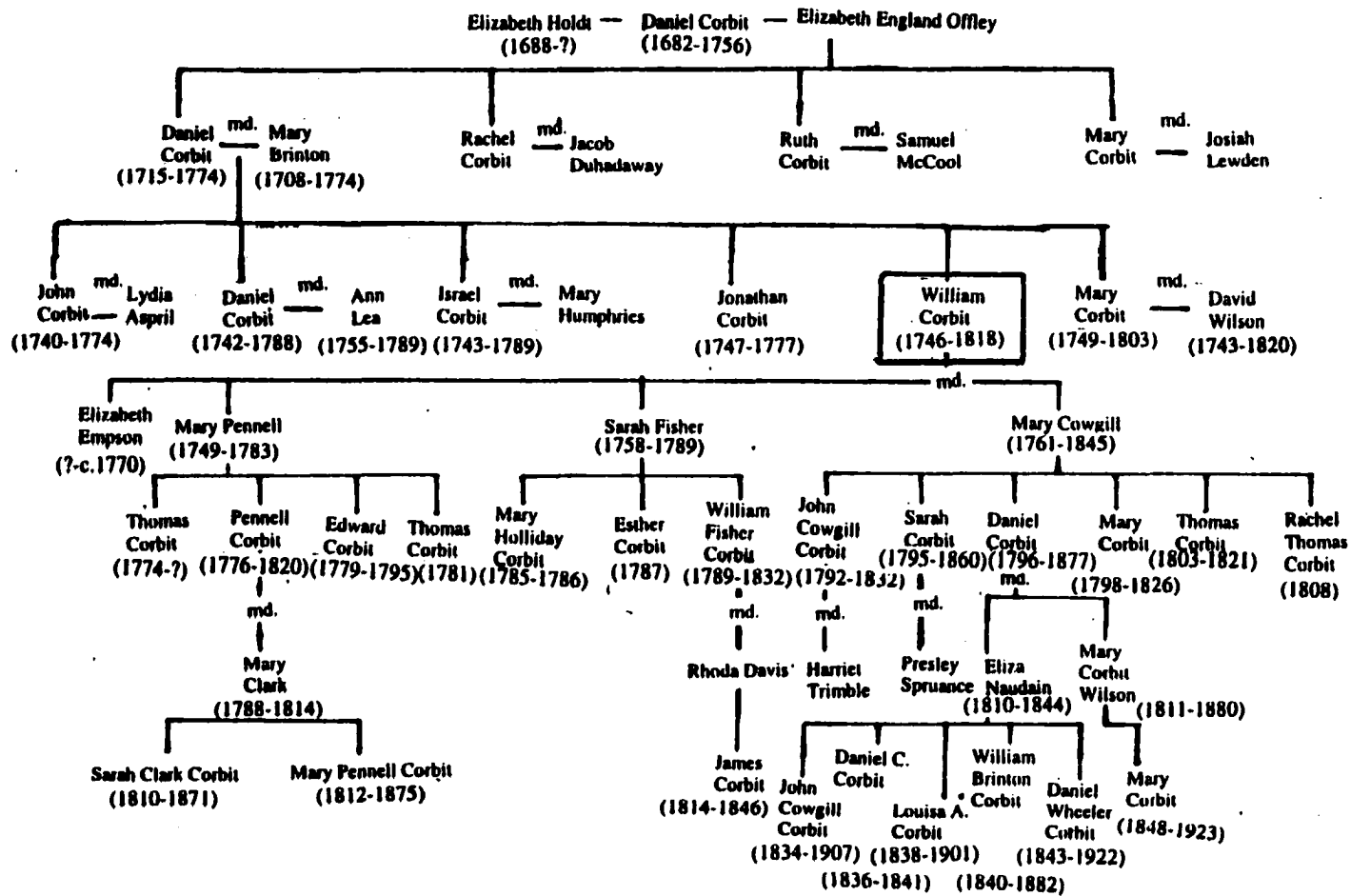


Figure 2. Corbit genealogy, abridged.



Figure 3. The Corbit-Sharp House exterior, 1960. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

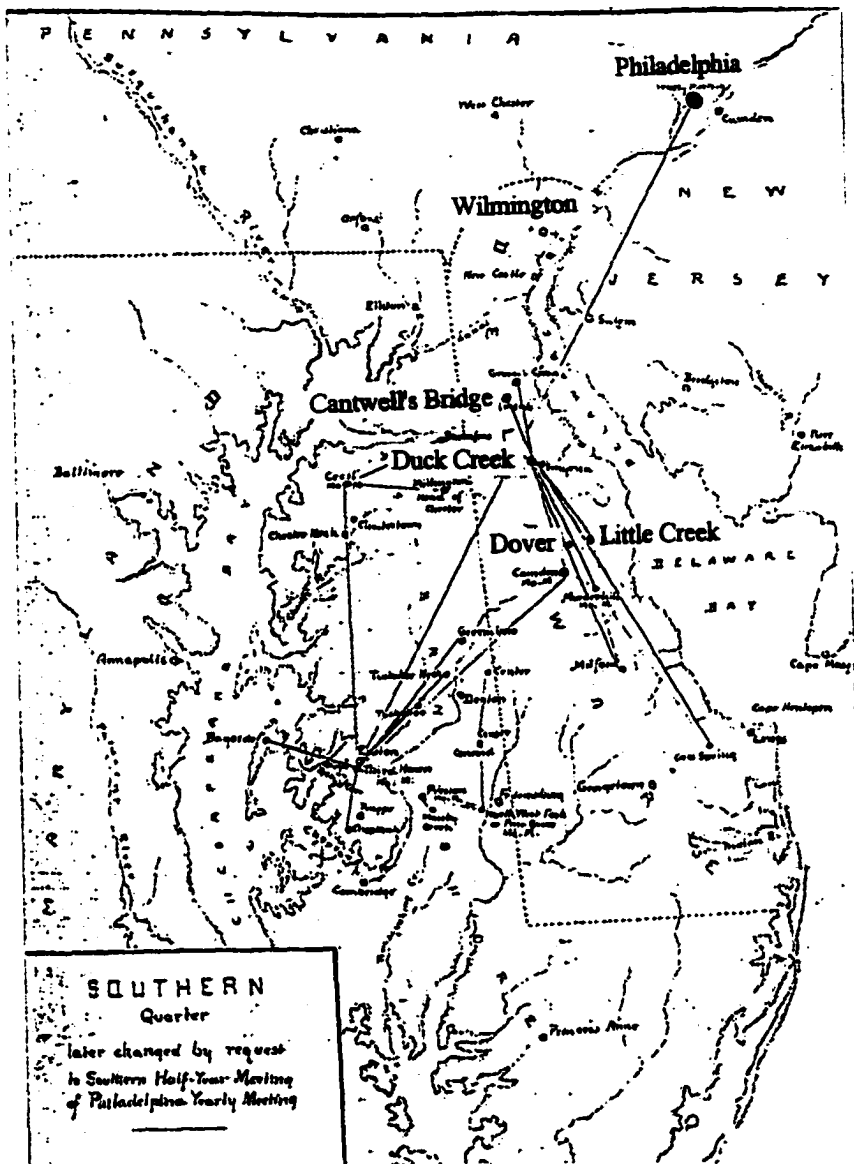


Figure 4. Map of towns in Southern Half-Year Meeting, undated. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

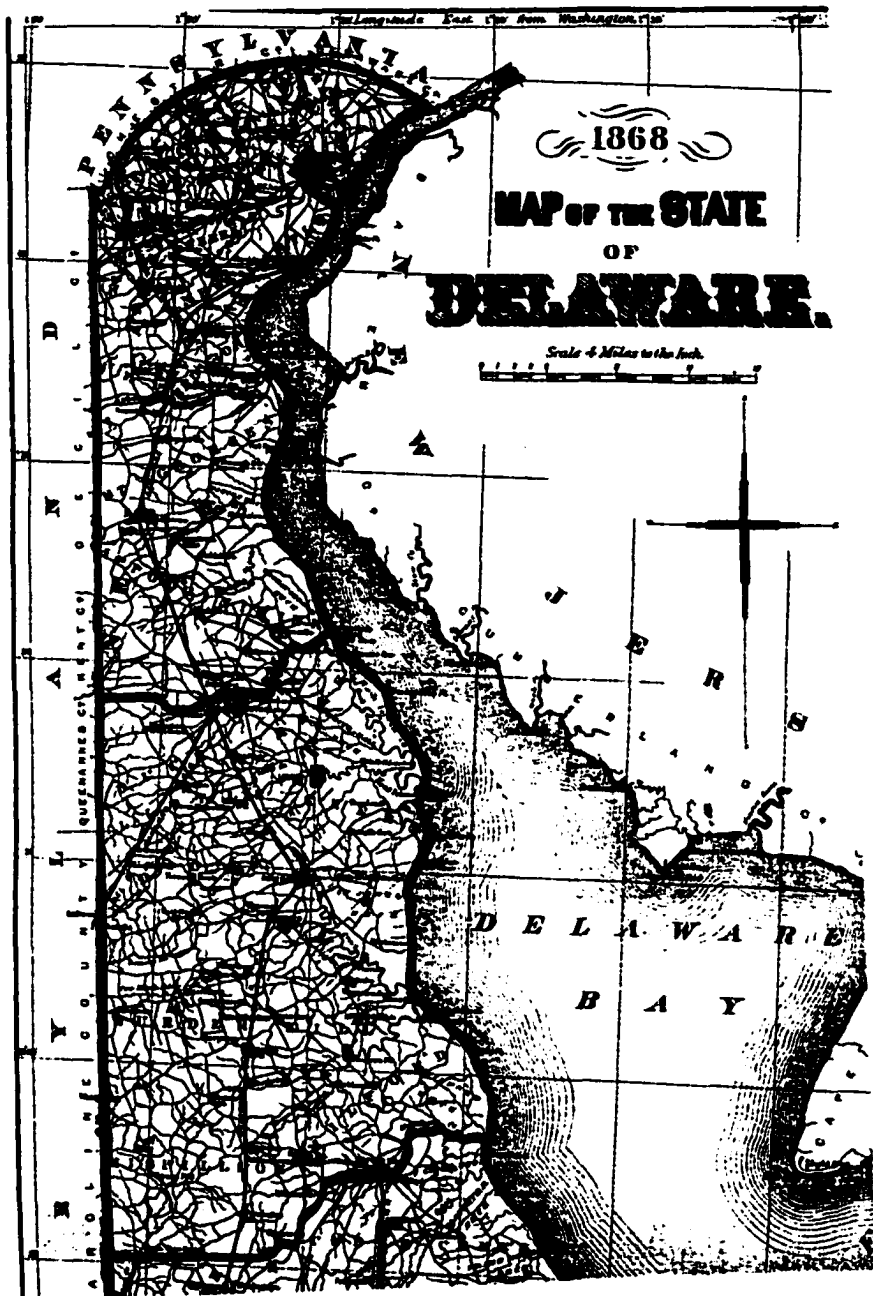


Figure 5. Map of Delaware, New Castle and Kent Counties, 1868. From *D. G. De Beers Atlas* (Philadelphia: Pomeroy & Beers, 1868). Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.



Figure 6. Map of St. Georges Hundred, 1868. From *D. G. De Beers Atlas* (Philadelphia: Pomeroy & Beers, 1868). Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

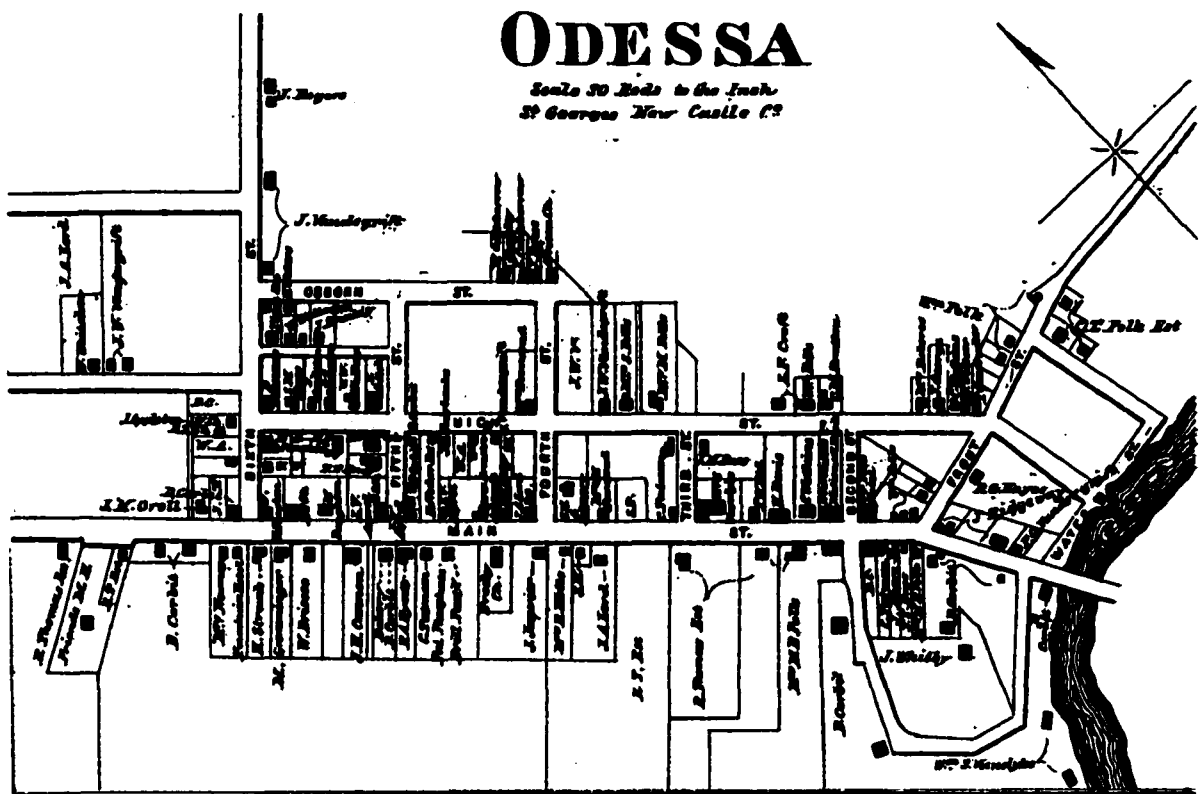


Figure 7. Map of Odessa, 1868. From *D. G. De Beers Atlas* (Philadelphia: Pomeroy & Beers, 1868). Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.



Figure 8. The Corbit House with Outbuildings, 1875. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

This late nineteenth-century photograph shows several of the outbuildings razed during The Corbit-Sharp House's restoration.

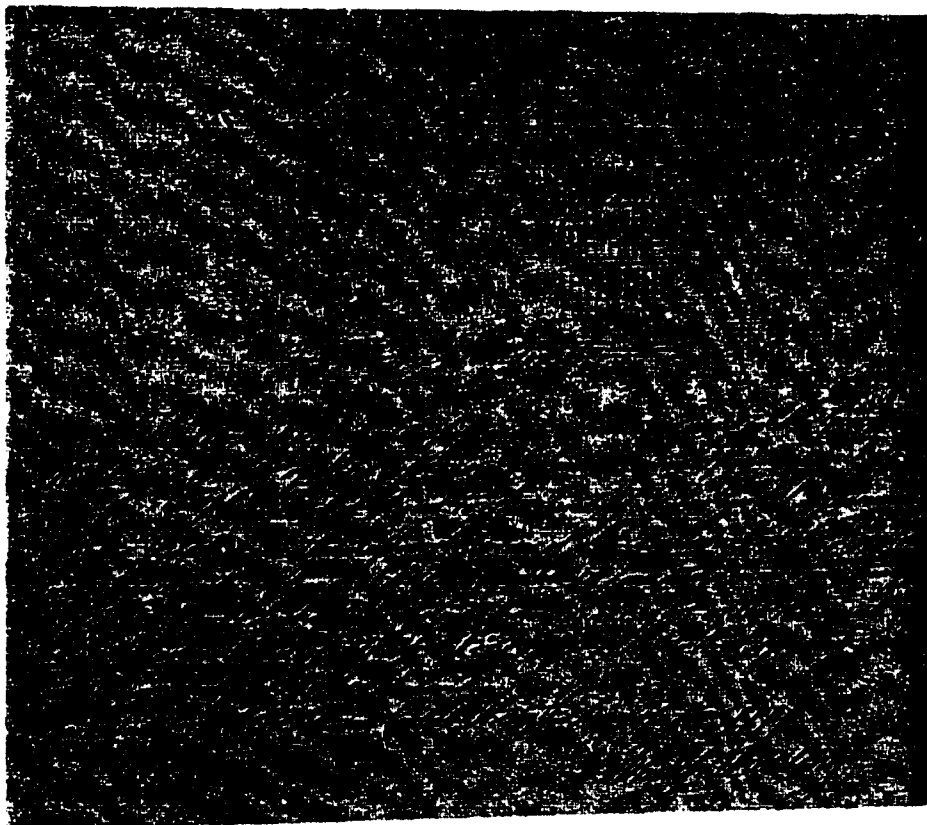


Figure 9. Survey of the Corbit Property by Philip Reading, 1777. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

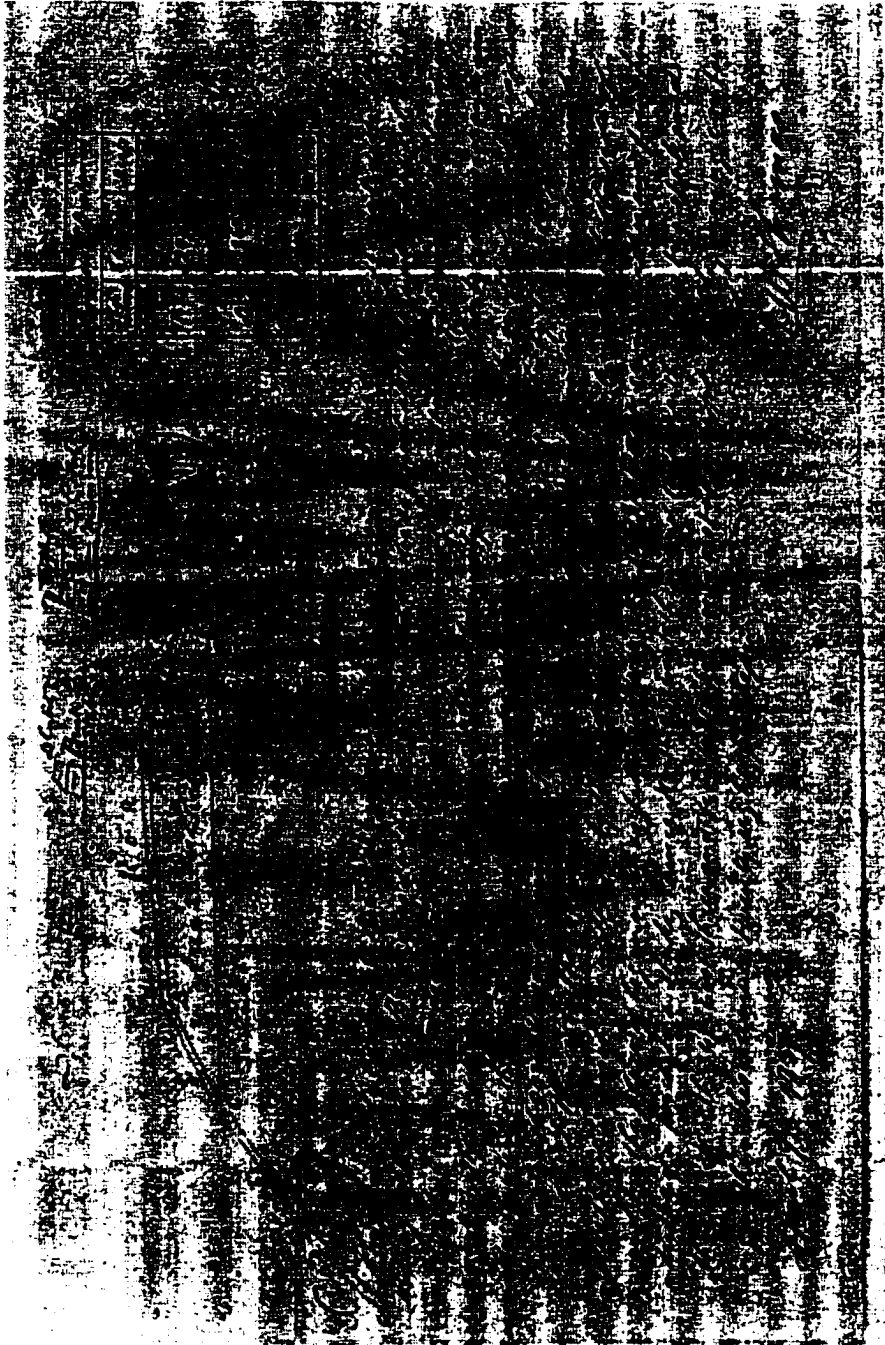


Figure 10. Survey of the Corbit Property by D. W. Thomas, 1839. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.



Figure 11. The Corbit Property, including carriage house, 1938. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

The Corbits' brick carriage house is pictured in the far left background, with the mansion to the right.



Figure 12. The Corbits' Service yard, including smokehouse, 2000. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

The original smokehouse is to the left and the 1790 kitchen addition is to the right. Doors leading from this service yard directly into the basement kitchen are located just behind the lamppost.

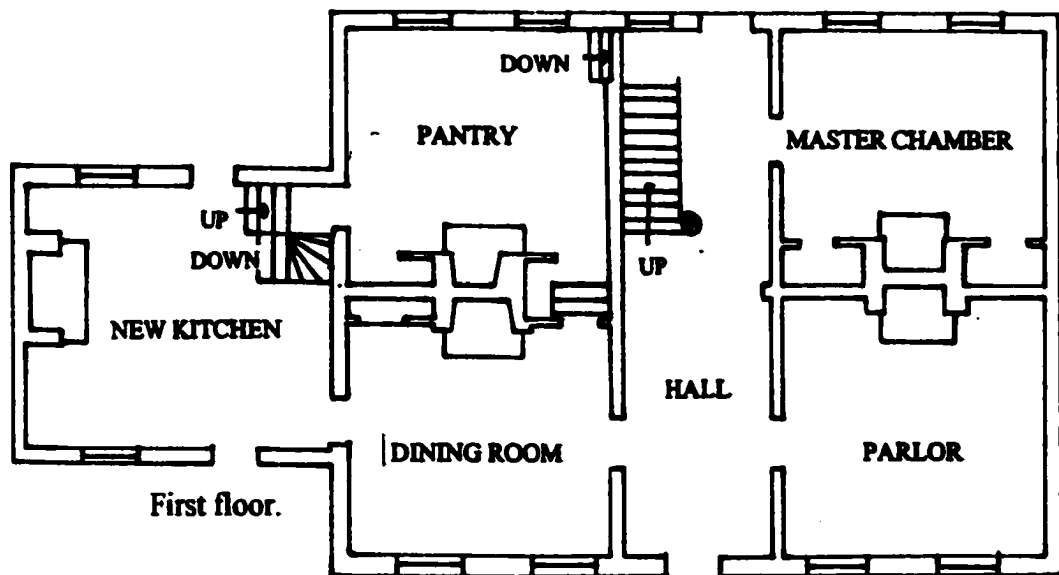
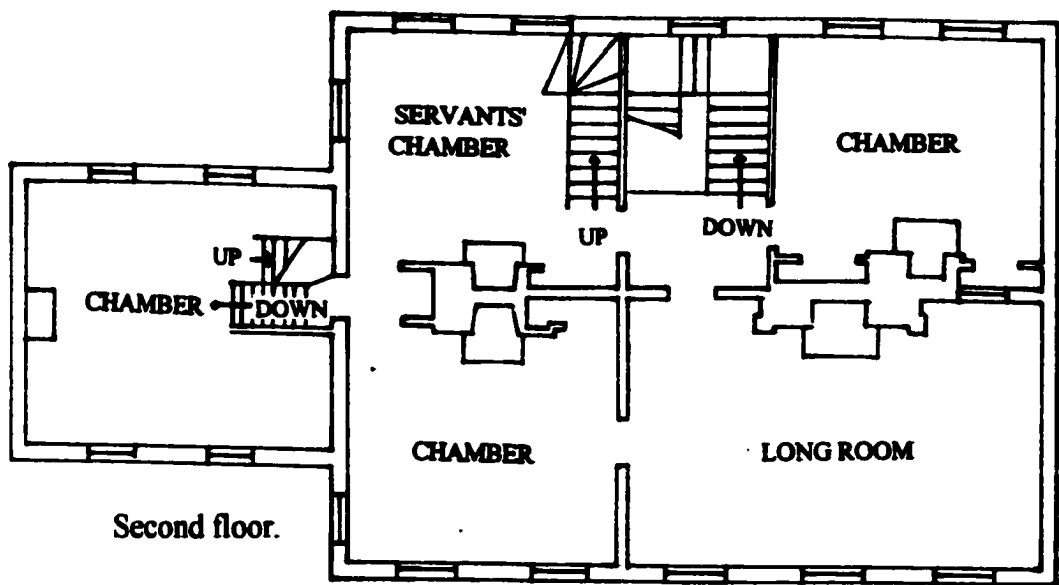


Figure 13. Floor Plans of The Corbit-Sharp House. Drawn by Amy Marks after John A. H. Sweeny.

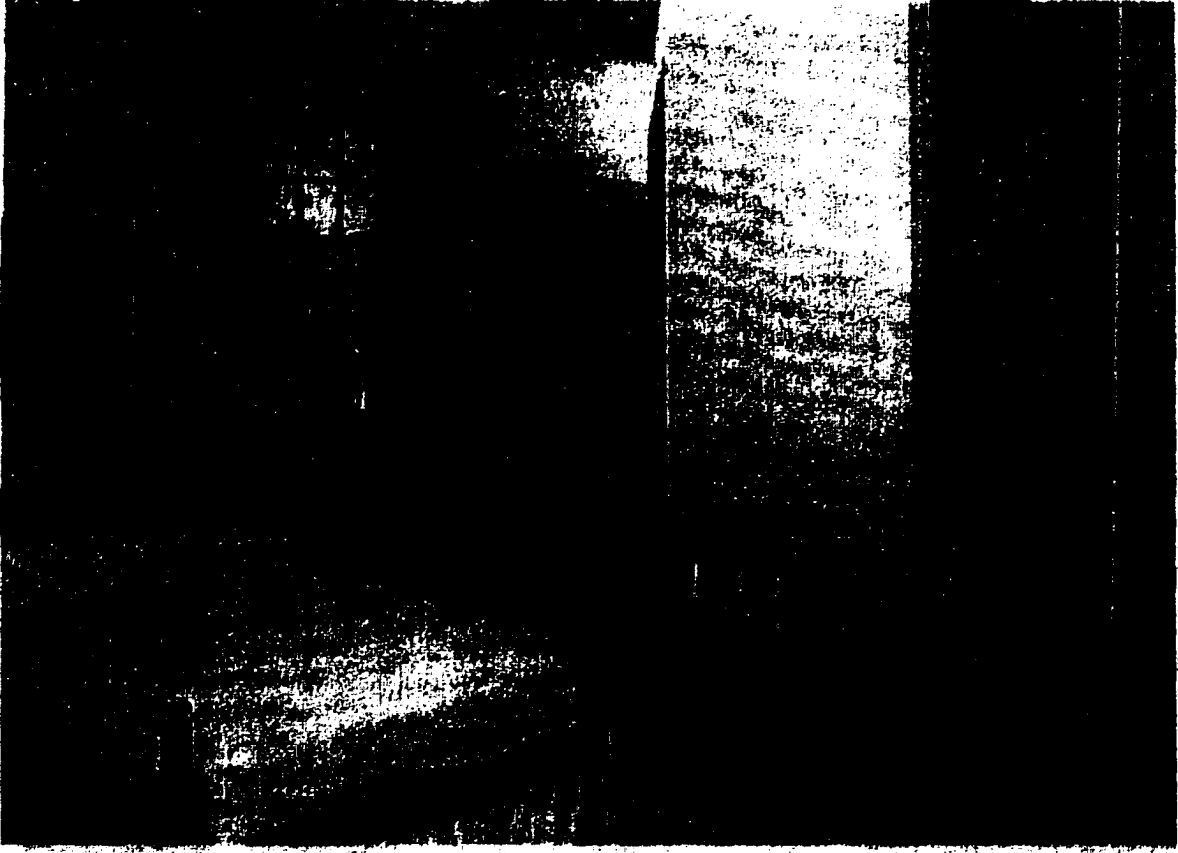


Figure 14. Servants' Bedroom, The Corbit-Sharp House, 1980. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.



Figure 15. The Long Room, The Corbit-Sharp House, 1958. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.



Figure 16. Basement Storage, The Corbit-Sharp House, 1958. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

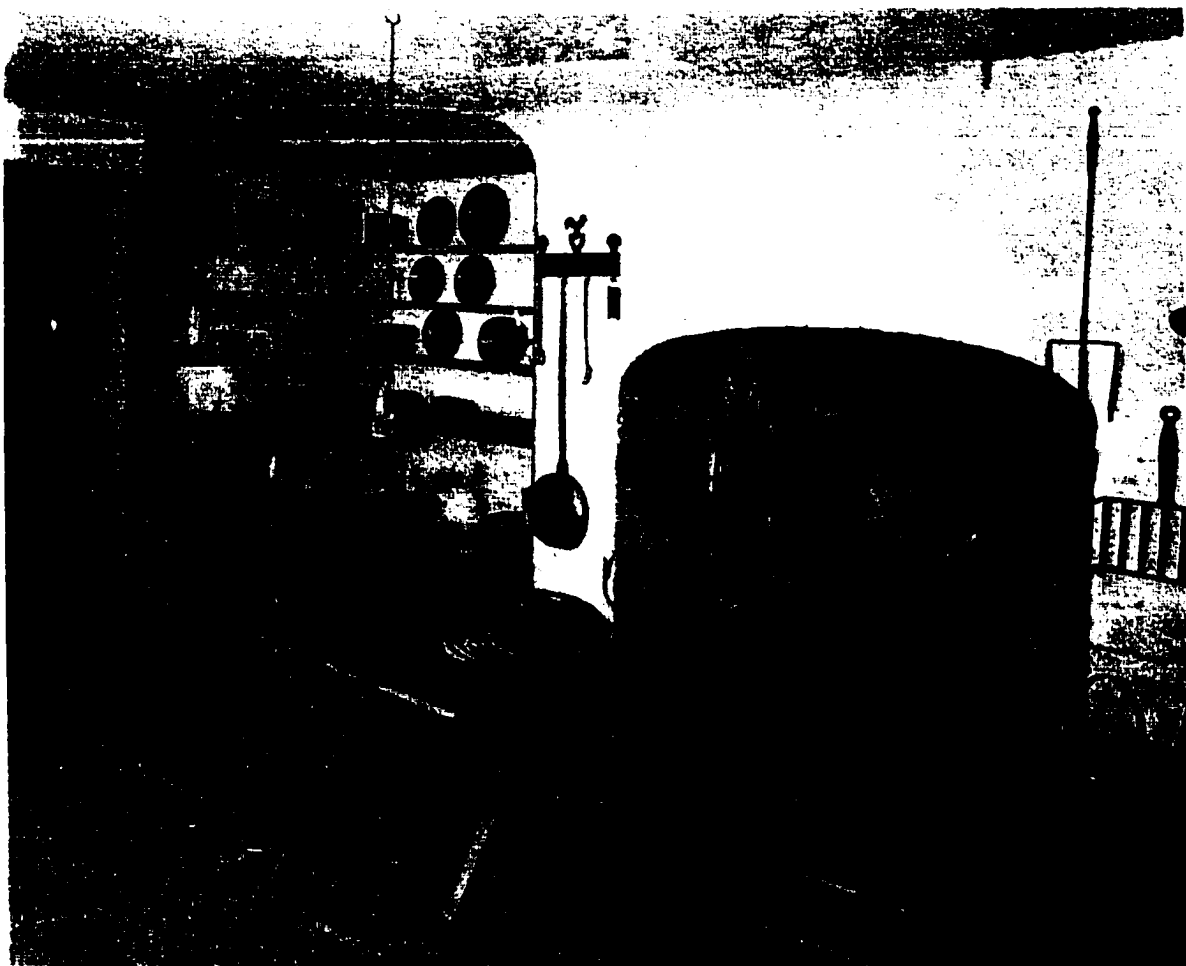


Figure 17. Basement Kitchen, The Corbit-Sharp House, 1958. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.



Figure 18. Central Hall, The Corbit-Sharp House, 1977. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

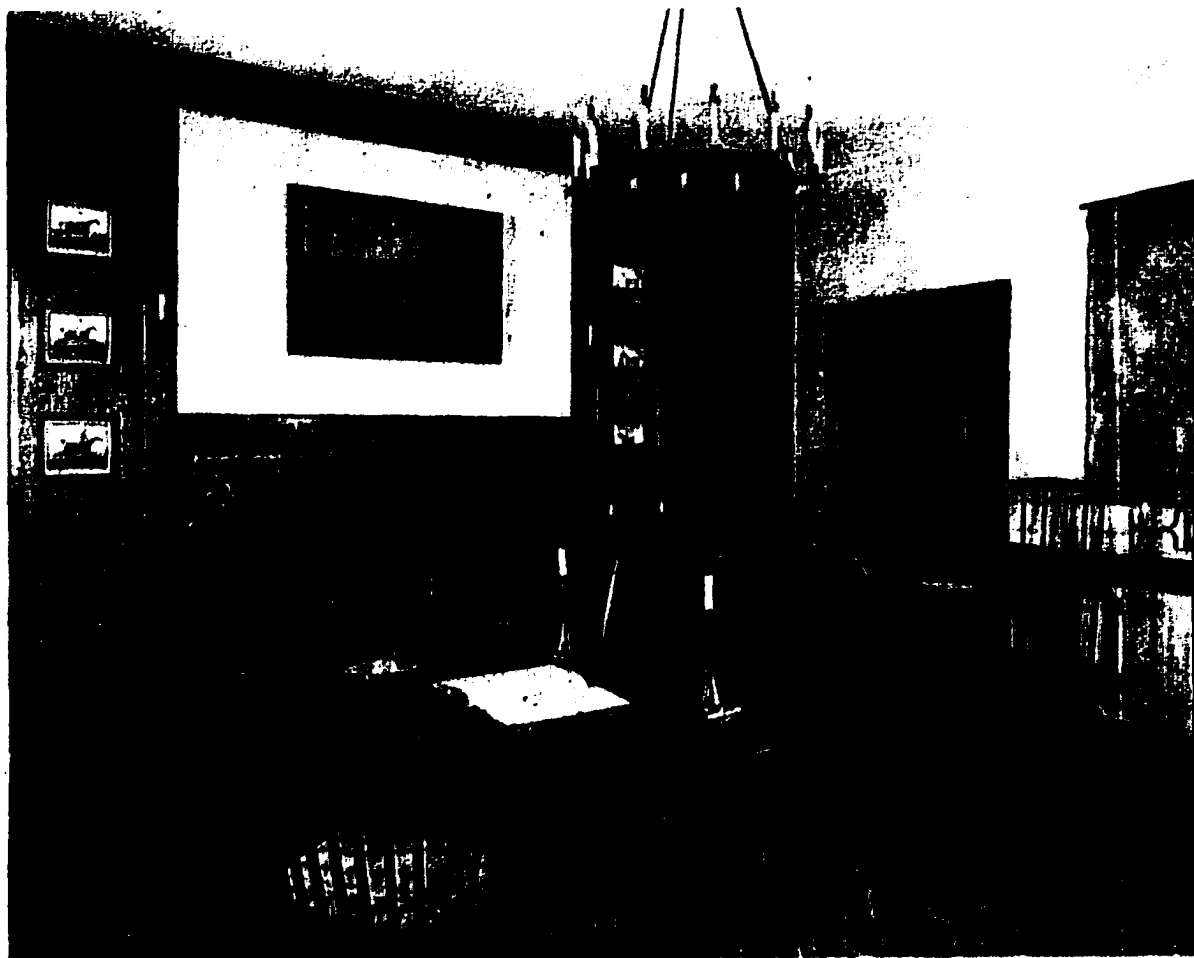


Figure 19. Pantry, The Corbit-Sharp House, 1960. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

The door to the far right leads to the service stair and the 1790 kitchen. (See Figure 22)
Furnishings reflect interpretation of the space as an office.

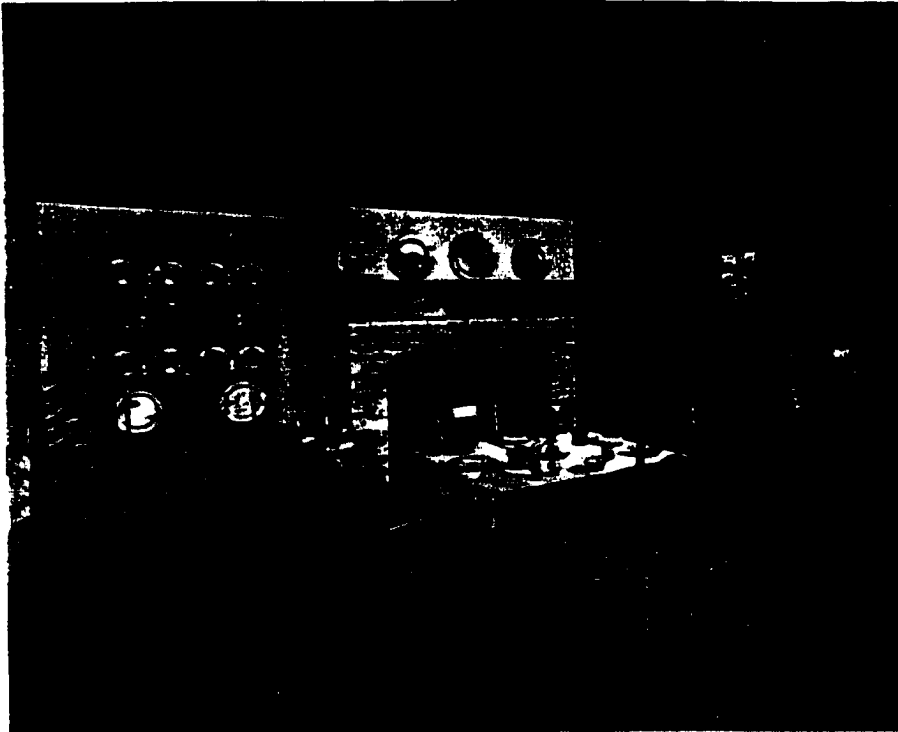


Figure 20. 1790 Kitchen Addition, The Corbit-Sharp House, c. 1960. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

Furnishings reflect an earlier interpretation.



Figure 21. 1790 Kitchen Addition, The Corbit-Sharp House, 1958. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

The leftmost door leads to the outside service yard (see Figure 12), while the rightmost door opens on a service stair to the basement. The staircase in the center leads to both the pantry and another service stair. (See Figure 22) Furnishings reflect an earlier interpretation.

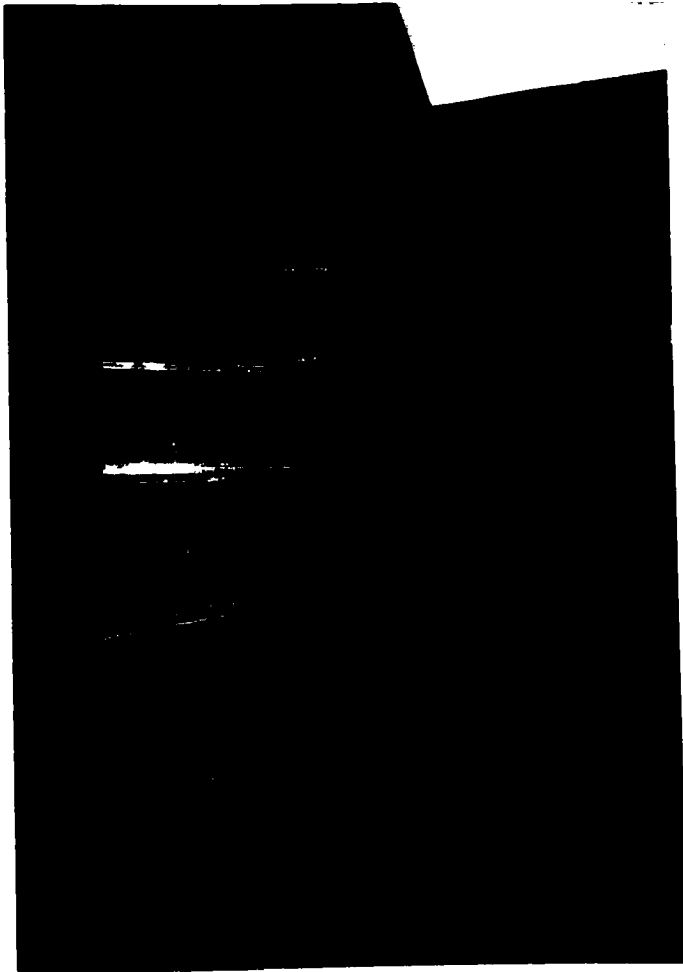


Figure 22. Service Stair, with 1790 kitchen in the background, The Corbit-Sharp House, 2000.

A view from inside the pantry looking toward the 1790 kitchen. The spiral staircase runs between the servants' second-floor chamber and the first floor kitchen.

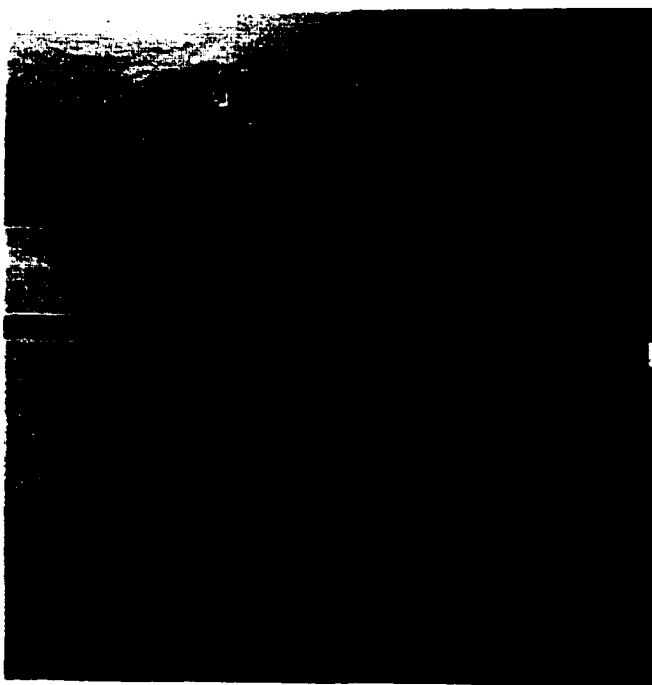


Figure 23. Basement Kitchen, with meat hooks in the ceiling, The Corbit-Sharp House, 2000.

The leftmost door leads directly outside to the service yard. (See Figure 12)

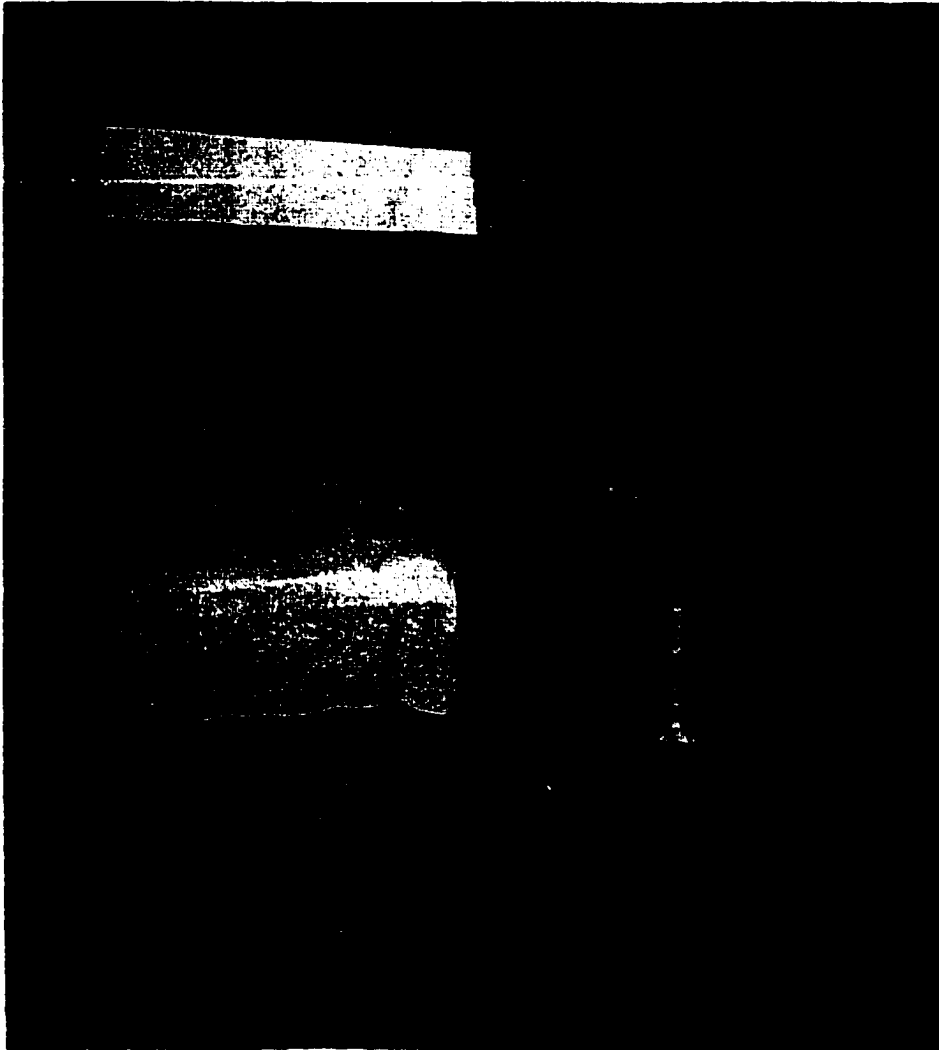


Figure 24. Master Bedroom, with chamber closet door, 1958. Courtesy of Winterthur's Historic Houses of Odessa.

APPENDIX B:
TRANSCRIPTION, WILLIAM CORBIT'S WILL, 1818

I William Corbit of New Castle County State of Delaware being Old and Infirm but of Sound mind Reflecting on the uncertenty of time here and knowing all men must Die Ane in Order to dispose of what Worldly property I posess both Real and Personal which the Almighty hath blest me With I make this My last Will and Testement After my Just Debts are paid I give and Bequethe a follows to Wit

Itum 1

I leave to my Dearly beloved Wife During Her naturel Life the Dweling House I now reside in, the Ground attached thereto, Carriage House and Half the Brick Stable, With the Lot of Ground between and Tan-Yard, Also fire Wood off the place my Son John C Corbit now resides, With my Horse & Gig Two Cows and my Caulard Man Abraham Dorsey, during the time of his present Indentures, Also all the Furniture of Every Discription in said House during Her Life Said furniture to be Disposed of in Manner hereafter to be mentioned

Itum 2

I Give and Bequeath to my Beloved Son Pennell Corbit after the Deca's of my Dear Wife my manson Dwelling Hous and Garding, as far Westwardly as the Brick Stable also a Lot of Ground containing Six Acres leaden to Tan-Yard (Said Tan-Yard being conveyed to Him Already,) With a Lot of upland Adjoining the State Road as far Eastward as a White Oak now Standing in Said Lot as far as a Land Drain in the Side of the Meddow thence Eastwardly a few Rods to Ditch running in a Direct line to the Creek thence Westwardly

up Appowinimink Creek to Meddow belonging to John Starr and the Causway to the lane between Doctr Richd C. Dale and My Self opposite Said Oak tree as specified Above Also five and a half Acres of Wood Land Adjoining the Road leading to Saml Thomas' Landing and Lands of Said Thomas & Richd C Dale to Him and His Heirs I also leave to my Son Pennell Corbit During the Life of my Beloved Wife the House and Garden He now resides in With half the Brick Stable the Westward part of Said Stable.

Itum 3

I Give and Bequeath to my beloved Son Wm F Corbit the Store House and Lot below the Bridge With the Ground from the Road Westward, including the Corn Crib and Twenty five feet to the northward to Said Road, Also a lot of meddow from the Road and Water coarce to the Lower Sluice thence down the Creek as far as my meddow Goes from thence to the Shore thence Eastwardly on the upland Marsh of Saml Thomas Within two perches of a Sassafrass Standing on the rising Ground Southward in a line Where my Son John C Corbit resides to the Road now ocupied by Said Corbit thence Westwardly along Said Road to the Water coarce as Aforsaid Likewise five Acres of Woodland Adjoining that of Pennell Corbit and Saml Thomas and Doctr Richd Dale, Said Wm F Corbit to pay to my Son Thomas Corbit When He arrives at the age of Twenty one years Two Hundred Dollars, the Aforsd property to Him and His Heirs

Item 4th

I Give and Bequeath to my Beloved Son John C Corbit the Plantation He now resides on Which I bought of Joseph Ellexander Also Eight Acres of upland to the Westward of Said line and parralel With Said line from Saml Thomas' field to Within about three Rods of a Peach tree thence Eastwardly to the aforesaid Plantation, To Him and His Heirs forever

Item 5th

I Give and Bequeath To my Beloved Son Daniel Corbit the Store and Lot above the Bridge and back of my Son Wm F Corbits to John Starr' line and to the Northward of what I devised to my Son William one Hundred feet from the North line of Said Corn Crib lot to the Road Also the upland Eastward of the upland I Bequathed to Son William With the Marsh atatched thereto, to the Northward, Also a peace of Meddow to the Westward of the Watercoarce and from the Road including a Small peace of upland adjoining Said Road in a Direct line Where part of a Ditch is now Dug and post and rail fence Standing to the Creek thence down the Creek to the Sluice and up the Water coarce Crossing the Road, With a peace of Meddow above opposite Doctr Richd Dales Orchard to the place of begining or post and rail fence, Also five Acres of Wood Land adjoining the Northern of Wm F Corbits Saml Thomas and Doctr Richd Dale Also a Lot of Ground fronting the Main Road Adjoining Ground of Jasper Curry Decd to the North Westward and Lot to the South Westward to my Son Wm F Corbit, To Him and His Heirs Forever—The aforesaid lots to the Westward ajoinig John Starr

Item 6th

I Give and Bequeath to my Beloved Son Thomas Corbit after the Deceas of my Beloved Wife, the House my Son Pennell now occupies and Garden. Also the Dwelling House adjoining With the Brick Store and Garden attached thereto. With the Ground from the Road leading to the Tan-Yard including the frame Buildings from the West of the Brick Stable to the line of David Wilson for Stabling My Beloved Wife to Receive the profitts of the Brick Store and Dwelling House adjoining thereof until He arrives to the age of Twenty one years for His mentainance Also a peace of upland in a line With the Road between Doctr Richd C Dale and me as to join that I Bequeathed to My Sons Pennell and Daniel With a peace of Meddow attached thereto Northwardly to the Creek, thence up the Creek until it Intersects and joins the Meddow I have left to my Son Pennell and along the aforesaid line by the Oake Tree to the Road aforesaid Also All the Marsh & Cripple from the Bridge over the Water coarce With the upland to the Southward of Said Road adjoining Lands of Saml Thomas and John C Corbit Likewise about Six Acres of Wood land to the Northward of the Lot for Danl Corbit being the residue of Woodland To Him and His Heirs

Item 7th

I Give and Bequeath to my Beloved Daughter Sarah Corbit my three Story Brick House With the two Wooden frames Do back of the Same With the lot now inclosed Also the two Story Brick House adjoining With the Yard as far Back as now Occupied the aforesaid Houses are on Eght Street Spring Garden Philada Penn Township Philada

County Also Fifty feet of Ground fronting the Main Road at Cantwells Bridge New Castle County Delaware adjoining the Southward Side of a lot I gave my Son Pennell Corbit runing to the line of John Starr

Item 8th

I Give and Bequeath to my Beloved Daughter Mary Corbit Three Brick two Story Houses and two frame two Story Do on Eight Street Spring Garden Penn Township Philada County With the Lots atached thereto adjoining the two Brick Houses I Bequeath to my Daughter Sarah With the residue of the Ground at Cantwell's Bridge between Sarah Corbit and Daniel Corbit from the Main Road to the line of John Starr

I Have Fifty Acres or thereabout of Marsh and a Small portion of upland I bought of Wm Liston Which I leave t my Son John C Corbit provided He pays to my Daughter Sarah Corbit one year after my Decd 100 Dollars and to my Daughter Mary Corbit 100 Dollars and my Son Thos Corbit 100 Dollars Should He decline the Same my Exrs may Sel the Same in one year after my Deces and the Amt thereof to be Divided between my Daughter Sarah & Mary and My Son Thos Corbit

My Personal Estate I leave as follows After the Deceas of my Beloved Wife, my Clock Desk and Book Case I leave to my Son Pennell With one third of my Books the residue of my furniture I Leave to my Daughter Sarah one fourth to my Son Daniel one fourth to my Daughter Mary one fourth to my Son Thomas one fourth of the Whole of my

Furniture, as to my other Personal Estate after my Debts are Paid, I leave the Same to be equally Divided between my Beloved Wife and All my Children Without naming them

Nothwithstanding my aforesaid bequest I leave to my Beloved and Kind Ancient Friend Alis Murry Who has resided With me Many Years I Bind my aforsaid Children to pay the arforsaid Alis Murry as follows Annually Without Defalcation That is to Say Pennell Corbit Ten Dollars Wm F Corbit Ten Dollars John C Corbit Ten Dollars Danl Corbit Ten Dollars My Daughters Sarah and Mary each Five Dollars a peace Amtg to Fifty Dollars yearly for Her Mentainance

Lastly I Nominate Constitute and appoint my Beloved Son Pennell Corbit and my Son john C Corbit to be Whole and Sole Executors of this my Last Will and Testament as Witness my Hand and Seal this Eleventh Day of the third month one Thousand Eight Hundred and Seven-teen 1817

Signed and Seal'd the Day and Date Above Writen before us as Witnesses to the arforsaid Will

Wm Corbit (*Seal*)

Witness

John Starr } affd Aug 13

D Wilson, Jun

New Castle County Ss Before me personally appeared John Starr and David Wilson Junior the two subscribing Witnesses to the above and foregoing Will who being duly affirmed did severally say that they saw William Corbit the Testator sign and seal the above and foregoing Instrument of writing and heard him publish pronounce and declare the same to be his last Will and Testament—That at the time of his so doing he was (to the best of their belief) of sound disposing mind and memory—That it was at the request of the Testator in his presence and in the presence of each other they severally subscribed their names thereto as Witnesses—In Testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand at New Castle the 13th day of August A D 1818.

Evan Thomas Reg.

Transcript is after Sweeney, *Grandeur on the Appoquinimink*.

Original document is in the Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

APPENDIX C:
TRANSCRIPTION, WILLIAM CORBIT'S ESTATE INVENTORY, 1818

An Inventory of the goods and chattels of William Corbit decd, that were bequeathed to his wife Mary Corbit during her natural Life appraised by us the Subscribers this 27th day of August 1818.

In Parlour

	\$ cts
1 Sopha.....	25 00
6 Mahogany chairs.....	12 00
6 dtto do	9 00
1 Mahogany dining table.....	8 00
1 dtto Card Table.....	5 00
1 Looking Glass.....	10 00
1 Waiter large Size.....	2 00
1 East India Carpet including Entry.....	10 00
2 Maps.....	15 00
1 Clock & Case in Dineing Room.....	60 00
1 desk and book Case.....	30 00
1 Side board.....	20 00
1 Mahogany dineing table.....	8 00
1 dtto breakfast table.....	6 00
1 looking glass.....	5 00
6 Windsor chairs.....	3 00
Andirons Shovel & tongs.....	5 50

	\$ cts
1 Carpet & fire rug.....	15 00
6 Silver table Spoons.....	15 00
5 do tea do.....	1 50
In Entry Contents of cupboard.....	1 50
6 Windsor chairs.....	5 00
1 Settee.....	2 00
3 arm chairs.....	3 00
	<hr/>
Amt card. Over.....	\$276 50
Amot brot over & Continued.....	276 50

(Back room North Corner)

1 highpost bedstead and Saking bottom.....	8 00
1 bed quilt 2 Sheets 2 pillow cases & bed.....	20 00
1 dressing table.....	1 50
1 Walnut Stand.....	1 50
4 old Chairs.....	2 00
1 Small looking glass.....	2 00
1 couch & mattress.....	12 00
1 pr. old brass andirons.....	50
2 window curtains.....	2 00
Contents of cupboard.....	10 00

	<i>\$ cts</i>
1 Sett large Knives & fks 3.00 2 small dtto 2.50.....	5 50
1 ps. rag Carpeting.....	50

Front Chamber East corner

1 Sash Curtain.....	4 00
1 Chest of Magy. Drawers.....	15 00
1 pr. of bureaus Mahogy.....	25 00
6 Windsor Chairs.....	9 00
1 Mahog. bedstead & Saking bottom.....	6 00
1 bed 20\$ Counterpin 4\$ bolster & 2 pillay.....	24 00
1 looking glass.....	4 00

(Front Chamber South corner)

1 Walnut Beurau.....	5 00
1 bedstead & S. g. bottom.....	10 00
1 bed 25\$ 1 Spread 1.50.....	26 50
6 pr. Rose blankets.....	15 00
3 ditto—2.50 1 single coverlid.....	5 50
1 woolen quilt 5.00.....	5 00
2 pr. fine linen Sheets.....	8 00
3 pillow Cases.....	1 50
1 pr. fine linen Sheets.....	4 00
3 Course ditto do.....	3 00

	\$ cts
1 Muslin ditto.....	75
	<hr/>
Amt card. over.....	\$513 35
Amot. brot over & Continued.....	513 35
1 Single coverlid 2.50—1 ditto do 2.50.....	5 00
2 double ditto.....	22 00
(Back Chamber West corner)	
1 bedstead an S. g. bottom.....	3 00
1 bed, bolster and pillow.....	12 00
2 Sheets and bed quilt.....	3 50
1 Servants bed & bedding.....	2 00
(Back Chamber North corner)	
1 bedstead and S. ng bottom.....	5 00
1 bed and bolster.....	20 00
2 Muslin Sheets and 1 comfortable.....	4 50
2 Window curtains.....	1 00
1 dressing Glass.....	1 50
Lumber in garrett.....	5 00
(Back room & West corner downstairs)	
Sundrys in [P.] room.....	2 00

in cellar	\$ cts
1 bbl Shad & 2 hhd with herrings.....	5 00
Sundrys in [P.] cellar.....	3 00
ditto Kitchen including wooden ware.....	20 00
1 ten plate Stove in ditto.....	15 00
Kitchen Chamber furniture.....	3 00
200 lb. Bacon at 15 cts. pr. lb.....	30 00
Horse & Gig.....	40 00
2 Cows.....	40 00
Negro man Abraham Darrey to serve five years five months & 18 days...	150 00

Books

Family Bible 2\$ Fennings Geography 2 vol.....	4 00
Bigland View of the World 5 Vol.	
2d 3d 4 th vol. Josephus.....	6 50
Pinkertons Geography 2 Vol. 1.50 Regniers Egypt 1 vol. 50.....	3 50
Wilson Egypt 1 vol. 75—Jno. Griffith 1 vol. 75.....	1 50
Stuart View 1 vol 1\$.....	1 00
Bartrams travels 1 vol. 1.50—mecellanious pomes 1 vol.....	2 00
<hr/>	
Amot. brot. over.....	924 25
Amot Brot. over & Continued.....	924 25

Nickar on religion 25 Thos Chalkley 1 vol. .25.....	50
Universal History 9 vol. 6.75 Annual Register 3 vol.....	8 25
Foxs Journals 1 vol.....	2 00
A lot of odd Volumes Pamphtes &c.....	5 00
Denon Egypt 2 vol, .50 Barrow travels 1\$.....	2 00
Calm Observer 75—Barlow husbandry 1.00.....	1 75
	<hr/>
	943 75

An Inventory of the goods and chattels of William Corbit (Decd.)

Appraised by the Subscribers the 27th day of Augst 1818

As property not bequeathed to his wife.

Wearing Apparel 20 Dols. Watch 2 Dols.....	22 00
1 Old Cart 5 dols. 1 old Coache 50 dols.....	55 00
1 Old chair & harness.....	5 00
2 piggs in pen 4 dol.....	4 00
1 Stack of wheat Supposed 20 bushels.....	35 00
1 Six plate Stove 5 dols. sundry Black smith Tools including Bellows, Anvil, &c.....	25 00
1 cow.....	16 00
	<hr/>
Pennell Corbit } Exrs.	162 00
Jno. C. Corbit	

whole Amount..... 1105 75

20

Samuel Penington

John Janvier

New Castle County SS: I hereby certify that Samuel Penington and John Janvier
Appeared me the Subscriber one of the Justices of the Peace in and for said County and
was duly Qualified to Appraise all the Goods and Chattels of the Estate of William Corbit
decd. by on signing as witness my hand and seal this 26th day of January A. D. 1820.

Th. P. Reynolds

Transcript is after Sweeney, *Grandeur on the Appoquinimink*.

Original document is at the Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

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